Fulfilling Roles: Midland Women, developing roles and identities C.1760-1860

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Abstract

This thesis examines the lives of a group of Midland women in the period c. 1760-1860. They were the wives, sisters, daughters and mothers of the middle-class entrepreneurial and professional men of the region. During this period the Midlands produced individuals who expanded production and commerce, often with little technical innovation, but with a shrewd sense of what was marketable. Men such as the Wedgwoods, Boultons and Kenricks built businesses, sponsored canals and highways, and invented, produced and sold an ever-expanding supply of goods world-wide. Yet while the lives of such men have been celebrated, the women of these families have often been overlooked. They are the focus of this thesis, which will address this gap in the history of the entrepreneurial and professional families of the Midlands.

Examining the identities of these women through a range of archival and printed sources, both as individuals and as members of families, communities, networks and organisations, particular attention is paid to changing social and cultural attitudes. The thesis will investigate whether and how their experiences contributed to the wider debates on women's roles in this period, examining the role of networks in assisting women to operate in a variety of spaces, broadening their political consciousness, and questioning what, if any, generational changes are visible. The thesis will argue that in this period, middle-class women negotiated social and cultural conventions of class and gender through a variety of roles which empowered them to shape their own identities. A microhistory study such as this highlights the more subtle and complex efforts made by women in search of autonomy, filling in gaps created in broader studies. In revealing

contradictions of the norm, a more nuanced view of women's experiences can also emerge. The thesis aims to extend existing knowledge in the field of social and cultural history by researching the experiences of these middle-class women of the Midlands who, for the most part, notwithstanding their achievements as businesswomen, religious figures and contributors to science and literature, have escaped the notice of scholars of women's history. Yet knowledge of women's activities beyond feminist campaigns can broaden our understanding of what may have been important to their social group. They all had something to say, even the quieter ones. In examining their activities this thesis restores their social and cultural histories and, by highlighting their concerns and interests, allows a more inclusive picture of British middle-class women's experiences in the period 1760 to 1860 to emerge, with some surprising results.

Contents

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Abbreviations

BA	Bristol Archives
BAH	Birmingham Archives and Heritage
BCC	Birmingham City Council
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
BMAG	Birmingham Museums and Galleries
CRL	Cadbury Research Library
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DUP	Duke University Press
FSB	Female Society for Birmingham
HUP	Harvard University Press
JHUP	John Hopkins University Press
LRO	Leicester Record Office
MEG	Midland Entrepreneurial Group
MUP	Manchester University Press
n.s.	New Series (in journals)
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OUP	Oxford University Press

PRO	Public Record Office
PUP	Princeton University Press
SUP	Stanford University Press
TNA	The National Archives
UCL	University College London
UCP	University of California Press
UMP	University of Michigan press
UPV	University Press of Virginia
WALS	Wolverhampton Archive and Library Services
WMA	Wedgwood Museum Archive
YUP	Yale University Press

Introduction

This thesis examines the lives of a group of Midland women in the period c.1760-1860. They were the wives, sisters, daughters and mothers of the middle-class entrepreneurial and professional men of the region. Although the pace of British industrialisation remains a subject of academic debate and revision, there is a general consensus that during this period the Midlands produced individuals who expanded production and commerce, often with little technical innovation, but with a shrewd sense of what was marketable.[1] Men such as the Wedgwoods, Boultons and Kenricks built businesses, sponsored canals and highways, and invented and produced an ever–expanding supply of goods sold across the world. Yet while the lives of such men have been justly celebrated, the women of these families have often been overlooked.[2] Some of these women are the focus of this thesis, which

[1] Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 101-4. For debates on the Industrial Revolution see: N.F.R. Crafts, 'The Industrial Revolution: Economic Growth in Britain, 1700-1860', *Refresh* 4, (1987): 1-4; Pat Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005, first published 1992), 9-36 and 121-26; Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review,* new series (hereafter n.s.), 45, no.1 (1992): 24-50.

[2] Women often only rate a mention upon marriage to the entrepreneur. See for example, H.W. Dickinson, *James Watt, Craftsman & Engineer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP) 1935), 92-3.

will address the gap in the history of the entrepreneurial and professional families of the Midlands.

Aims

The aim of this thesis is to explore the identities of women with roots in the Midlands, as individuals and as members of families, communities, networks and organisations. Paying particular attention to changing social and cultural attitudes towards gender and class, it investigates women's efforts to create and sustain their own roles and identities in areas of business, religion, philanthropy, domesticity and authorship. The thesis also investigates the function of networks in assisting women to operate beyond the confines of home and domesticity and to broaden their political consciousness and will additionally establish whether generational changes are visible. Finally, it considers whether and how the experiences of these women contributed to the wider debates on women's roles in this period.

The thesis will argue that in this period, middle-class women negotiated social and cultural conventions of class and gender by undertaking a variety of roles which empowered them to shape their own identities. A microhistory study such as this can be helpful in highlighting the more subtle and complex efforts made by women in search of autonomy, filling in gaps created in broader studies and revealing what Giovanni Levi describes as 'the contradictions of the normative system'.[3] In this way this study allows a more nuanced view of women's experiences to emerge. The thesis aims to extend existing knowledge in the field of social and cultural history by

[3] Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, edited by Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity, 2001, first published 1991), 109-11.

analysing the experiences of eighteen middle-class women of the Midlands who, for the most part, have had little attention from historians. Yet in their lifetimes they established identities which were acknowledged by contemporaries: some, for example, for improving the success of their family business, others for influential contributions to philanthropy, and others still for their scientific and literary contributions. Notwithstanding their achievements, most have escaped the notice of scholars of women's history, despite efforts, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, to 'recover' eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's lives from historical oblivion. Jean Marsden, analysing women writers of the period, suggests the search for early feminists took priority over contributions made to a 'non-feminist cause', yet knowledge of middle-class women's activities beyond feminist campaigns can broaden our understanding of what may have been important to their social group, as they seized opportunities to create their own identities and shape coherent lives for themselves.[4] They all had something to say, even the quieter ones, and they should be heard because their presence contributed to the shaping of British society. Examining their activities helps to restore their social and cultural histories and, by highlighting concerns and interests that could include involvement in, for instance, religious ministry or engagement with the material culture of the home, a more inclusive picture of British middle-class women's experiences in the period 1760 to 1860 can emerge, with some surprising results.

[4] Jean Marsden, 'Beyond Recovery: Feminism and the Future of Eighteenth-Century Literary Studies', *Feminist Studies* 28, no.3 (2002): 659,661-2.

The women of this study, who had roots in the Midlands, belonged to a complex, yet flexible middle-class hierarchy whose family businesses were successful, and whose records have therefore survived. As a demonstration of that complexity, of the women in the sample at the beginning of their lives, ten were upper middle class, two were in the middle, five might be considered to be lower middle class and one was an impoverished gentlewoman. Of the same women, fifteen were from commercial and industrial families, two from professional families, both Anglican clerical families, and one a gentlewoman. Seven of the women were Anglicans, one a Presbyterian, five were Unitarian, two were Quakers, and there were two Methodists and one Primitive Methodist. There is a range of wealth, ages and marital status. They appear in their roles as wives, mothers, daughters or sisters, and of course some have overlapping roles. All the examples came from, or were connected to, the Midland counties of Leicestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire (parts of which are today in Worcestershire) in which there was a mixture of rural, manufacturing and industrial activity. Most were provincial, many were urban women based in Birmingham and the Black Country, and some migrated into or out of the region, or are included because of their significant contribution to the region's success.[5] With their families, they were involved to varying degrees in the development of Midland commercial, cultural, social and political life and were

[5] The Black Country, a colloquial term, was traditionally defined as an area west of Birmingham between Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall, known for its mining and metalwork, see: *Black Country History*, http://blackcountryhistory.org/places: accessed 25 September 2015.

attempting to form their identities in the face of constant change (see Appendix 1: Details of Case Studies).

Literature Review

Some of the examples have previously been the subject of research through the lens of business and economic history. Andrew Popp's *Entrepreneurial Families* is an account of the creation of the family business and family life of John and Elizabeth Shaw, whereas this thesis focuses on Elizabeth Shaw's own identity.[6] Charlotte Matthews and Sarah Florry were two of the case studies in Christine Wiskin's thesis on independent Midland women traders, while this thesis explores the value to women of social capital in the maintenance of business and social lives.[7] Elizabeth Smith featured in *Prophetic Sons and Daughters,* a study of female preachers set against a backdrop of agrarian poverty and unrest by Deborah Valenze. A Marxist-based study, it suggests that Smith, as a female preacher, was an 'active rebel'. This thesis looks at Smith as an evangelical female who created networks to sustain the communities in which she worked.[8]

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[6] Andrew Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families: Business, Marriage and Life in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012).

[7] Christine Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit in England, c.1780-1826' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2000); [http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/36386, accessed 22 September 2014].

[8] Deborah Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press (hereafter PUP), 1985).

Other historians have examined women collectively, including Hannah Barker and Alison Kay, who have researched lower middle-class business women in the north of England and London respectively, and Maxine Berg has researched business women in eighteenth-century Birmingham and Sheffield, mostly petty traders.[9] Amy Froide and Nicola Phillips have considered women as public investors and women in business networks respectively, providing useful insights into women's involvement in larger businesses, as many other analyses concentrate on petty trading, usually traced through directories, legal documents and civic records.[10] The women studied in this thesis have left personal accounts and family letters which give insight into women's experiences in running not only businesses, but philanthropic and religious projects, furnishing new homes, and surviving a riot, as well as becoming published authors and pursuing scientific knowledge. This thesis thus considers business as only one part of the creation of women's roles and identities, showing a whole range of activities and multiple roles with which women engaged.

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[9] Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP) 2006); Alison Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*: *Enterprise, Home and Household in London, c. 1800-1870* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Maxine Berg, 'Women's Property and the Industrial Revolution', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24, no. 2 (1993): 248-50.

[10] Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2005); Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business 1700-1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

Class, Gender and Networks

The women studied in this thesis are from the middle section of society. Up to the late eighteenth century the term 'middling sort' or 'middle sort of people' was used to describe this loose social group. From that period on, the term 'middle class' increasingly acquired currency. In this thesis, the term 'middle classes' will be applied when differentiation between the descriptors is unnecessary. As Margaret Hunt and Henry French demonstrate, the middling sorts resist classification. They can be said to embrace the older manufacturing and mercantile groups including independent artisans, not exclusively urban, who often operated from small workshops or premises adjoining the home.[11] With the increasing separation of work and home, tasks became more markedly gendered.[12] There is still, as Phillips and Vickery, for example, observe, a lack of agreement about when the middle class manifested itself, and how much of a division existed between middle class commercial culture and gentry families.[13] Boulton's wives came from gentry merchant stock, and three other examples in this thesis, Susanna Watts, Rebecca

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[11] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press (hereafter UCP, 1996),15; H.R. French 'The Search for the "Middle Sort of People" in England, 1600-1800', *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 1 (2000).

[12] Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (Harlow: Pearson, 1998), 117.

[13] Phillips, *Women in Business*,10; Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993), and *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press (hereafter YUP), 1999).

Kenrick and Mary Lloyd's husband Samuel, show gentry in their ancestry, but younger sons had been indentured by their families as apprentices and left to make their way.[14] If nothing else, the middle-class shared a strong competitive drive and a determination to achieve a lifestyle which would secure them against misfortune, and while initially similar in composition to the middling sorts this group grew in size, reflecting the expansion of commercial, legal and religious ranks within economic and professional groups. New clerical and expanding retail sectors boosted the lower middle class, while the top found room for wealthy bankers, city traders and commercial entrepreneurs.[15] The heterogeneous composition of these middle classes makes precise definition impossible. This, according to Dror Wahrman, was one of their strengths.[16] Levels of wealth were equally varied. Hunt sees the middling sort as the people of commerce and suggests most middling incomes around 1700 were between £50 and £2,000, with a concentration in the £80 to £150 range.[17] Davidoff and Hall estimate that, although middle-class income was famously hard to grade, in the early nineteenth century '£200 to £300 per annum secured a place in the middle class for an average family'.[18] But this was entry level. Upper, middle

[14] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1987), 222-23, 249.

[15] Ibid., 73, 245-9, 265-9.

[16] Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 16.

[17] Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 15.

[18] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 23.

and lower distinctions developed within the class, usually based on wealth, but social connections remained important, particularly for poorer relations.

Though clearly situated between the gentry and the labouring, or working class, individuals in this social group gained or lost ground within the hierarchy as their fortunes rose and fell. Most needed an income from either a commercial enterprise or a profession, and many invested surplus incomes as a hedge against life's unexpected downturns.[19] Some became 'gentrified', while others slid into relative poverty. A hallmark of the middle class was an emphasis on their 'independence' and belief in their own social group, which led to calls for a political voice, only partly met by the 1832 Reform Act.[20] Whereas the middling sort, as Hunt suggests, could be found in city 'mobs', the middle class were more likely to form political pressure groups such as the Anti-Slavery Society, working behind the scenes to influence people.[21] They also cultivated a reputation for moral and fiscal propriety.[22] Most were actively Protestant, and included a substantial cohort of non-conformists. Denied access to public appointments before 1828, nonconformists found an outlet for their energies in science, invention and commerce, and were drawn to towns such as Birmingham which, being uncharted and free from guilds, allowed them to create businesses. Class ties provided a further safety net against the hazards of life. In addition, as Amanda Vickery has shown in Georgian Lancashire, women

[19] Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 15.

[20] Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, 328-331.

[21] Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 6.

[22] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 185, 208.

constantly moved vertically through permeable class barriers in their everyday life, just as their men did in the course of business.[23]

As well as class, gender is a significant concept in this thesis. Legal discrimination was not limited to religion. Under nineteenth-century law married women became progressively disadvantaged before the introduction of the Married Woman's Property Act of 1870, due to the common-law principle of coverture, which rendered married women legally invisible.[24] In matrimonial disputes women could lose access to their children, and without a pre-nuptial settlement lose control over their own property, capital, interest and earnings. Yet many women seemed to operate with at least some autonomy. As Berg has demonstrated, whereas elsewhere in the country approximately 10% of wills were made by women in the eighteenth century, in Birmingham the figure rose to 22.8%. They also represented 30.4% of executors, and 23% of them set up trusts for their own legacies.[25] This suggests that in Birmingham, the lack of guild restrictions not only attracted enterprising and industrious men to the town, but the women were also showing a strong sense of independence, especially those in business who were accustomed to dealing with financial matters, although some of these trusts were probably set up by birth families to protect women's money. These characteristics of independent thinking are seen in many of the women in this thesis suggesting that, despite the law of couverture and the insistence of prescriptive literature, such as that of Sarah Ellis,

[23] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 29-31.

[24] Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society,* 291; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 5-6.

[25] Berg, 'Women's Property', 237-38, 250.

from the late eighteenth century that a woman's place was in the home, some women were used to exercising degrees of autonomy in the accumulation and distribution of their property.[26] Descriptive testimony of women indicates that although adherence to gendered division became one signifier of middle-class women's status, it could be mediated or ignored. At the same time, the fear of social ostracism might act as a check, particularly for those with social aspirations or, as will be shown, evangelical commitment. These complexities will be explored through the experiences of the women studied in this thesis.

Evangelicalism, though by no means universal in Britain, had a profound cultural and social influence on many middle-class women, as it was often adopted by its adherents as a tool with which to shape middle-class ideals and identity.[27] As the movement grew in strength from the 1780s, middle-class women were designated as the moral guardians of family religiosity and virtue and were urged, mainly through sermons and didactic literature, to confine themselves to the sanctity of private domesticity to protect their modesty and piety, and to create a haven of tranquillity for their husbands. John Tosh argues that 'the heyday of masculine domesticity' ran from the 1830s to the 1860s. As he points out, this was a period of

[26] For prescriptive literature see: Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England: their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits* (New York: Langley, 1843, first published 1839), 10; John Angell James, *Female Piety, or the Young Women's Friend and Guide through Youth to Immortality* (New York: Carter, 1854, first published 1852).72-115.

[27] See, for example, James, *Female Piety*; Sarah Lewis, *Woman's Mission* (London: Parker, 1839). See also the introduction to Chapter 2, 'Religion' in this thesis, for the origin of evangelicalism.

relative peace, and the home became a haven for many men who saw their engagement in industrialism, with its appalling social consequences for the working class, as a corrupting influence.[28]

As the family assumed greater moral importance in middle-class society, marital status became an important differentiating factor for unmarried and widowed women.[29] Without adequate financial provision following the death of parents or husbands, members of both groups could find themselves dependent on unsympathetic relatives or facing poverty. Such women might drift into the few occupations deemed suitable to their rank, frequently low-paid 'caring' work as governesses or companions yet increasing numbers of women seemed to choose not to marry. Never-married women were caricatured in the popular press as 'old maids' and their surplus numbers became a matter of public debate, especially in the nineteenth century, although this has been seen by some as the manifestation of a social anxiety engendered by women's increasing independence.[30] Widows, particularly those left without means, were also often portrayed as surplus to society's requirements, and as David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby have shown, there was a pervasive implication that single households in general were potential

[28] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: YUP, 2007, first published 1999), 6-7.

[29] Froide, *Never Married*, 16.

[30] Ibid., 180-1; W. R. Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant?' *The National Review* 28, (Apr 1862), 445-6.

sites of moral insufficiency.[31] How women dealt with such challenges will be explored by the thesis.

Networks were an essential part of life to the middle class, sustaining as they did the imagined community of the class. Women contributed in many ways, especially through epistolary networks which strengthened relationships, often with distant friends, relatives and social and business contacts. Links were forged through religion, business and families but there were also associational links like those of the scientific Lunar Society, or the Bible Society, as well as civic, political and intellectual associations. Networks could be more than the sum of their parts; deep loyalties were often forged between members and their families. With business networks, for instance, webs of trust might lead to finance for new projects, partnerships, and apprenticeships for sons. When the men of the Darby family died young, their business network, which overlapped with their religious network, supplied managers, advice, and trustees for the children. Without that support, the company may have failed. These highly social families often knew the same people; some worshipped together, others were connected through extended family and social networks, sometimes nationwide. Associations were popular in the eighteenth century, and the families of several members of the Lunar Society feature in the thesis.[32] Several Quaker women, like the Darbys featured in Chapter 3, travelled

[31] David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 51.

[32] Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future 1730-1810* (London: Faber, 2002), xiii-xiv; for associations see: R. J. Morris, 'Clubs, Societies

throughout the Midlands and Britain ministering to members of the Society of Friends, strengthening ties within the Society's extensive kin and friendship networks. The civic, and sometimes social, ostracism of Nonconformists drew denominations and sects together; those Quakers who observed endogamy intermarried. Unitarians had a similar network. In lower middle-class families with smaller enterprises, women often divided their time helping in the businesses of parents, brothers and husbands, extending their kinship and business networks, and with men away on business women depended on the local web of family and friends for support. Additionally, correspondence acted as a glue to bind these connections together, with women often the main communicators of domestic events (see Appendix 3: Family Networks and Background)**.**

Identity

In the first half of the nineteenth century successive social changes and scientific and technological advances led people to question who they were and who they wanted to be. With the expansion of urbanisation and increased competition in the public sphere, John Tosh describes urban men in identity crisis, attempting to find a balance in the home-work divide which would leave their masculinity intact.[33] Evangelical campaigns from the 1790s, with an emphasis on the reform of manners and morals in society, looked to the middle class to set an example, and sought to impose an ideology of identity on them, conflating notions of gentility with those of femininity and a retreat into domesticity for women. Such notions, according to

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and Associations', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, edited by F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

[33] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 140-1.

Davidoff and Hall, had become, by the 1830s, 'the common sense of the English middle class', implying that these women acquired an almost corporate identity.[34] This thesis uses a micro-history approach to identify how successful women were in developing their own identities in spite of any social constraints they encountered, as individuals and as members of social groups with which they identified.

Identity, Maureen Daly Goggin observes, is a slippery theoretical construct.[35] It is also a broad subject with many contrasting theories. Meritxell Simon-Martin, considering letters written by Barbara Bodichon, concludes that her performative epistolary voice was an expression of her lived identity.[36] This contrasts with Judith Butler's assertion that there is nothing behind the performance, because 'identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" which are said to be its results'.[37] Penny Summerfield argues that whereas early studies of identity saw women as playing passive roles given to them as outsiders in a man's world, more recently historians have recognised that women chose and adapted roles for

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[34] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, xvi.

[35] Maureen Daley Goggin, 'Fabricating Identity: Janie Terrero's 1912 Embroidered English Suffrage Signature Handkerchief', in *Women and Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies,* edited by Maureen Daley Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 18-9.

[36] Meritxell Simon-Martin, 'Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon's Travel Letters: Performative Identity-Formation in Epistolary Narratives', *Women's History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 234.

[37] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, first published 1990), 34.

'specific performances for particular audiences'.[38] While this thesis is informed by these debates, it focuses on identities in a specific historical context, as suggested in the collection *Identity and Agency in England, 1550-1800,* edited by Henry French and Jonathan Barry. The contributions, which include Alexandra Shepard's on honesty and worth, and Judith Spicksley's on spinsters, shed light on the relationship between gender and other types of identity, as well as the part played by judgement values whenever an individual was assessed by the community [39] These have been especially useful as this thesis has sought to identify women's expectations about, and responses to, social judgements about their behaviour.

Business

The pace and size of change in industrial expansion in this period has been subject to historical revision, and surveys such as those by Martin Daunton and Emma Griffin provide valuable context for showing how small businesses with little access to capital could grow successfully.[40] Hannah Barker demonstrates that many

[38] Penny Summerfield, 'Concluding Thoughts: Performance, the Self and Women's History'. *Women's History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 345-52.

[39] See: Alexandra Shepard, 'Honesty, Worth and Gender in Early Modern England, 1560-1640', and Judith Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations: Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the Spinster in Seventeenth-century England', in *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800,* edited by Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).

[40] See: M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford: OUP, 1995); Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution.*

industries, like those in the Midlands, relied on manpower rather than major innovation to expand their businesses, and Daunton and Pat Hudson discovered that a credit matrix was of greater use to businesses with low running costs than was capital for fixed costs.[41] This research is useful in helping to explain how so many small Midland businesses commenced with little capital and even, like Wedgwood, expanded. It will form an important basis from which to argue that women could be successful in business by adopting the same processes employed by men. Berg identified a surprising number of women executors, and Barker the benefit to widows of retaining business worth more as income than capital.[42] Both essays help to shed light on the convoluted financial affairs of women who were left with complex or unfulfilled legacies. Research on the use, and misuse, of women's capital by Margot Finn, Daunton, and Berg clarify the reasons why some were careful to protect daughters' fortune from male relatives. This thesis extends that argument to show that even when wills were carefully constructed, misuse of

[41] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty,* 236-245; Pat Hudson, 'Financing Firms, 1700-1850', in *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain: From the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, edited by Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (London: Routledge, 1994), 91-5; see also: Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution*, 26-7; Maxine Berg, Pat Hudson and Michael Sonenscher, in *Manufacture in Town and Country before the Factory*, edited by Berg, Hudson and Sonenscher (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), 5-6.

[42] Berg, 'Women's Property', 249-250; Barker, 'Women, Work and the Industrial Revolution', 91-4.

patriarchal power within families could lead to women being denied their full inheritance, and that some women redressed the balance for the next generation.[43]

Nicola Phillips, in her detailed study of women in business, provides valuable background for the analysis by this thesis of the Wedgwood and Schimmelpenninck finances, shedding light on the constantly evolving impact of the law, and the flexibility adopted by some in the judiciary, on women's opportunities to practice business. She concludes that the combined social, cultural and economic forces of prescriptive gendered cultural opinion, financial impediments and legal handicaps could not prevent women from being 'a significant, if not always visible', presence in England's growing economy, although she and Christine Wiskin agree that the process was not linear. These ideas are valuable to the chapter on business, which extends their ideas beyond formal financing, showing how women could access finance through social conduits to secure their businesses. This counters the notion that women could not raise capital for anything more than the petty trades and supports the view that women could operate at a high level in business.[44]

Religion and Philanthropy

Religion, central to the lives of many, though not all, eighteenth and especially nineteenth-century women, occupied a marginal position in the work of early feminist historians, according to Gail Malmgreen. In 1986 she regretted that 'religion

[43] Margot Finn, 'Women, Consumption and Coverture in England, c. 1760-1860', *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 3 (1996): 720-22; Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*,244-5; Berg, 'Women's Property', 248-250.

[44] Phillips, *Women in Business,* 261; Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 301-2.

has so far been a somewhat neglected element in the women's history revival'.[45] Phyllis Mack, herself a feminist, writing of Quaker women and their agency, agrees that in a more secular age, gender historians have tended to stress gender at the expense of religious actors' spirituality and 'complete self-transcendence'. Her *Visionary Women,* along with Linda Peterson's work on autobiography, provide real insights into the meanings embedded in Quaker Women's spiritual autobiographies and diaries, including one whose ministry is analysed in the thesis, Abiah Darby.[46] Mack has also written comprehensively on heart religion, which has been invaluable for unravelling the complexities of the later revivals such as Primitive Methodism and the emotional aspect of Catherine Marsh's Anglican ministry. Sandra Holton has also shed further light on Quaker women and on modern Quakerism, complementing Mack's study of the seventeenth century.[47]

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[45] Gail Malmgreen, 'Introduction', in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*, edited by Gail Malmgreen (Beckenham, Croom Helm, 1986), 1.

[46] Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: UCP, 1989), 5-9; Linda Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Writing* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia (hereafter UPV), 2001, first published in 1999).

[47] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008); Sandra Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780-1930* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

In a reflection of andro-centric tradition in academic history, studies written by men before the 1990s contained little about women's religious experiences.[48] Jeremy Gregory has amended that omission, producing a useful, wide-ranging historiographical account of the relationship between religion and gender formation, in which he shows how women in clerical families could bring public space into the vicarage, normally seen as a bastion of conservatism, in quite radical ways, reflecting the findings of this thesis in the experiences of Catherine Marsh.[49] Both D. W. Bebbington and Brian Harrison observe that evangelicalism, in its belief in the 'divinity latent in every human being', had social implications, with its insistence on the 'supremacy of conscience' leading to religious, social and political reform.[50]

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[48] See for example: A. D. Gilbert*, Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976); Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church Part One 1829-1859* (Norwich: SCM Press, 1966).

[49] Jeremy Gregory, 'Gender and the Clerical Profession in England, 1660-1850' in *Gender and Christion Religion, Studies in Church History* vol. 34, edited by R.N. Swanson (Oxford: Boydell, 1998), 235-271. See also: Jeremy Gregory, 'Religion, Gender and Industry in the Eighteenth Century: Models and Approaches', in *Religion, Gender and History: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting,* edited by Geordan Hammond and Peter Forsaith (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011).

[50] D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995, first published 1989), 3; Brian Harrison, 'A Genealogy of Reform in Modern Britain', in *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform:*

Boyd Hilton has argued that this was the age of atonement and piety for many within the middle classes, but for M.J.D. Roberts, the driving force behind moral reform was a 'group anxiety … among those of recently acquired or precarious social rank'.[51]

These contributions, along with Frank Prochaska's *Women and Philanthropy* and the later *Christianity and Social Service,* also form a useful framework for an analysis of the motives behind women's philanthropic activity and their role in the expansion of voluntary associations.[52] Clare Midgley and Moira Ferguson, furthermore, provide comprehensive accounts of the anti-slavery campaign in the 1820s and early 1830s and interesting conclusions on the imperialist motives of the British.[53] Particularly helpful in articulating the intricate networks created by Lucy

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Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey, edited by Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, (Folkestone: Dawson Archon, 1980), 134.

[51] Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001, first published 1986); M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787-1886* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 41.

[52] Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2006).

[53] Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (Abingdon: 2014, first published 1992).

Townsend and Mary Lloyd, the founders of the largest female anti-slavery association, the Female Society for Birmingham examined in this thesis, is Kathryn Gleadle's metaphor of a rhizomatic approach to describe the significance of strong networks, particularly appropriate for these radical yet socially conservative women who worked unobtrusively yet achieved so much.[54] Gleadle's *Borderline Citizens* and *The Political Worlds of Women* by Sarah Richardson both offer examples of nineteenth-century women who employed their female agency to gain access to various 'political worlds', employing a mixture of old and new strategies to maintain that access.[55] These are very useful when considering the mixture of radical activities and conservative demeanour of philanthropists such as Susanna Watts.

Domesticity

Feminist historians, American and British, began formulating theories on gender from the 1960s and created a persuasive model of gender separation known as the 'separate spheres' theory. They argued that a domestic ideology was developed against a background of urban industrialisation, changing work patterns and the

[54] Kathryn Gleadle, 'The Imagined Communities of Women's History: Current Debates and Emerging Themes, a Rhizomatic Approach', *Women's History Review* 22, no. 4 (2013): 525. Acknowledgement is also due to the originators of this theory: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum Press, 1988, first published in 1980).

[55] Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender, and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867* (Oxford: OUP, 2009); Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

emergence of a class structure which, once work and home were separated, resulted in the gendered division of public and private worlds. This, they argue, largely prevented middle-class women from taking up most forms of employment from fear of losing caste, and was a patriarchal notion intended to engineer the power structure in favour of men.[56]

Family Fortunes by British feminist historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, is a Marxist-based gender study of the English middle class between 1780 and 1850 which echoed this model in 1987, though with caveats against generalisation. It argued that gender was a tool which renegotiated and reformed domestic and public life to the point that separate spheres increasingly became the model of choice for the middle class.[57] This persuasive work exerted enormous influence in various academic fields, but as Marxist theory weakened towards the end of the twentieth century revisionists challenged this deterministic view.

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[56] For influential early works, see for example: Joan Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-75; Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Women's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: YUP, 1977); Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women's History in Transition: The European Case', *Feminist Studies* 3, (1975-76): 90; Ann D. Gordon, Mari Jo Buble and Nancy Shrom Dye, 'The Problem of Women's History', in *Liberating Women's History*, edited by Bernice Carroll, 75-92 (Illinois: Urbana, 1976), 89; Michelle Rosaldo, ' Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview', in *Woman, Culture and Society,* edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press (hereafter SUP), 1974), 23-4.

[57] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, xvi.

In 1993 Amanda Vickery argued that many women had not only claimed autonomy within class and gender boundaries but had also moved relatively freely through porous walls into other social groups.[58] She questions the wisdom of assuming that the modern interpretation of the meaning of public and private was the same as that of historical actors, suggesting that there was a significant difference, not only in language, but also in practice, a view shared by many academics such as Jane Rendall and Lawrence Klein, who argue convincingly for the mutability of boundaries between the public and private in time and space.[59] A variation on that theme is Simon Morgan's concept of the public sphere as an organic entity which continually re-formed, with women an essential part of the process of redefining the perimeters.[60] Alison Twells takes a tangential step, arguing that evangelical missionary philanthropy gave rise to a new public sphere and civic culture in early nineteenth-century England,[61] and others suggest that several counter-publics exist.

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[58] Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? 396, 412.

[59] Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', *Gender & History*, 11, no. 3 (1999): 482-3; Lawrence Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century studies* 29, no. 1 (1995), 98-100; see also: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011, first published 1962).

[60] Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris, 2007), 4.

[61] Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle* Class*, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2009); 6.

Jane Rendall, Linda Peterson and others argue that gender was not monolithic, as women had many priorities which changed with circumstances,[62] and Vickery asks whether the monopolising notion of separate spheres in prescriptive literature might instead have been 'simply a defensive and impotent reaction to public freedom already won' by women.[63] Davidoff and Hall's response in 2002 argues that the division of the public and private still provides a useful focus for historians, as does the trope of 'separate spheres' and also point out, quite reasonably, that the original edition warned against over generalisation.[64]

Since Vickery's first challenge to the notion of separate spheres, this vigorous debate has enlivened social history and given rise to new historical research. Kathryn Gleadle revisited *Family Fortunes* on its twentieth anniversary, acknowledging its scope, detail and ambition, and praising its pioneering treatment of masculine identities, although noting that it has been overtaken since by other studies on the subject. Her conclusion was that the work remains relevant because of its seminal aggregation of two main themes of women's history: the effect of gender within social structures, and the recovery of liminal women's voices, areas this thesis extends with an analysis of the activities of women who have been largely

[62] Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', 482; Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography,* 2.

[63] Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', 400.

[64] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, xxv.

forgotten by history, but who led autonomous lives in the period covered by Davidoff and Hall's work.[65]

Gender studies emerged from these debates, broadening the scope of women's history. Tosh acknowledges that his study, *A Man's Place*, would not have been possible 'without the achievements of women's history', as it allowed him to look not only at the whole family, but also at men in the private sphere, an area previously seen as wholly feminised.[66] He advances a theory which in some ways challenges the separate spheres theory, suggesting that many men encouraged the presence of women in the home, not from a position of patriarchal superiority, but in an effort to make sense of the changing patterns of industrial and suburban life. He also suggests that the ideology of separate spheres has exercised the minds of historians more than it ever did those of the Victorians.[67] This thesis, building on such works, demonstrates the many variations of autonomy found in women's lives, and untangles those roles which are imposed on women, from roles which have been mediated by them, or self-fashioned in order to create identities for themselves.

Hussey, Ponsonby and Froide agree that marital status, when employed as a category of difference, could constrain the autonomy of the never-married female

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[65] Kathryn Gleadle, 'Revisiting Family Fortunes: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Publication of L. Davidoff & C. Hall (1987) *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson)', *Women's History Review* 16, no. 5 (2007): 779.

[66] Tosh*, A Man's Place*, 2.

[67] Ibid., 33-4, 77.

and the widow by bringing them under special social scrutiny in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[68] The notion persisted, often expressed satirically through print culture, that unmarried women were a threat to male hegemony and the institution of marriage. This reached a climax with the extensive Victorian public discourse around 'the woman question'.[69] Hussey and Ponsonby chart the ambivalent consequences to single homemakers, both the never married and the widowed, of creating a home as visible evidence of their respectability and desire to conform socially.[70] These contributions are very helpful for understanding homemaking and the use of material culture among the never-married in this thesis, which aims to show how resourceful single women, including widows, could be in presenting themselves as conforming women, while negotiating strategically to develop their own identities.

Authorship

Authorship expanded from the late eighteenth century in response to the demand for education and entertainment from the growing middle classes, and several women whose experiences are considered here became authors. This was an exciting time for women ambitious to become writers. The introduction of the novel,

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[68] Hussey and Ponsonby*, The Single Homemaker, 51;* Froide, *Never Married*, 16-43.

[69] Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant?' 441-6. Greg quotes the Registrar-General and the 1851 census to suggest that 1,248,000 women in England and Wales between the ages of 20 and 40 years were unmarried out of a total female population of 3,000,000, some 41.6%.

[70] Hussey and Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker,* 30-51*.*

in removing the need for a classical education, opened the door to such women, especially with the expansion of periodicals from the 1830s. As Margaret Beetham has shown, publishers demanded an endless supply of short stories, articles and poetry, which women were willing to provide, with and without remuneration. Beetham's historiography is very helpful in providing the background against which three of the women studied in this thesis worked.[71] Most of the women authors of this thesis are relatively unknown, and Betty Schellenberg and Linda Peterson particularly have shown how the development of a literary canon of women writers, the professionalization of writing and the work of some leading authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including that of Jane Austen, marginalised writers who did not conform to the idea of writing in genres,[72] thus explaining why

[71] Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1-35. For the periodical market see also: Margaret Beetham, 'Periodical Writing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing,* edited by Linda H. Peterson, (Cambridge: CUP, 2015); Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003); Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines: an Anthology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press (hereafter MUP), 2001); Ros Ballaster *et al.*, *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991); Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

[72] Betty A. Schellenberg, The *Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Linda H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman*

women such as Catherine Hutton, though popular in her time, have been forgotten. From a historical perspective, the recovery of the work of women like Hutton, Watts and Schimmelpenninck, regardless of its aesthetic quality, is important if we are to fully understand the ideas that interested readers who bought or borrowed their work. Without the writing of these authors, we have a distorted historical view of the quality and variety of middle class reading matter in the period.

Recognising the solitary nature of writing, Pamela Corpron Parker has argued that some authors created imagined communities among themselves, based on correspondence. Citing George Eliot's pleasure at such exchanges with Elizabeth Gaskell, Parker suggests that letters may have represented 'a form of professional assertion': evidence of acceptance within the literary community.[73] This theory is

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of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market (Princeton: Princeton University Press (hereafter PUP), 2009); Linda H. Peterson, editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing;* see also: Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1994, first published 1992); Cheryl A. Wilson, '"Something like Mine": Catherine Hutton, Jane Austen, and Feminist Recovery Work', *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no. 2 (2015); Elizabeth Eger et al., editors, *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); Alison Chapman, 'Achieving fame and canonicity' in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing.*

[73] Pamela Corpron Parker, 'Woman of Letters: Elizabeth Gaskell's Autograph Collection and Victorian Celebrity', in *Material Women 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices,* edited by Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 270. The concept of 'imagined

useful for considering the motivation behind the writing practices of women authors considered in Chapter 5, particularly the solitary Catherine Hutton.

Methodology

The Approach, Samples and Sources

This qualitative study analyses a sample of eighteen women with roots in the Midlands and, employing a range of sources, investigates their experiences. Paying particular attention to the influence of networks, gender and class, the thesis seeks to shed light on these women's identities, both personal and social, as they navigated their lives through a variety of familial and social contexts. The thesis is organised in five thematic chapters, representing significant aspects of public and private life in the period: business, religion, philanthropy, domesticity and authorship. Although these contexts obviously ran concurrently, and women could be involved in several to varying degrees, separating the themes out allows for the more nuanced analysis of women's experiences, made possible by a micro-history approach which provides insights into the influences that may have driven their choice of roles.

This project began as an investigation into the middle-class women of the Midlands whose men were associated with entrepreneurial and professional expansion in the region. Although the men achieved recognition, the women remained elusive; for example, some evidence of their activities was only found by

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community' is drawn from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006 rev. ed., first published 1983); Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*.

searching business archives under the names of their men. A regional study was chosen firstly, because it provides a coherent, yet flexible structure. Secondly, the industrial success produced a legacy of preserved archive material, particularly in Birmingham's Archive and History centre, yet sources of women have been largely under-researched. No exceptionality is claimed for the Midlands; research elsewhere has shown the value of regional studies in tracing the cohesiveness of familial and commercial loyalties and obligations. Hannah Barker's latest publication, for instance, *Family and Business*, demonstrates that extended family links could influence decision-making for small business traders, men and women, within North-West towns.[74] Alison Toplis and C.L. Fowler also argue that local studies of retailing can better illuminate the regional patterns of commerce than can be achieved by evidence taken nationally from random sources. As this thesis shows, moreover, regional strength often stimulated extension of activities to

[74] Hannah Barker, *Family and Business during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 2017); Alison Toplis, 'The Non-Elite Consumer and "Wearing Apparel" in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 1800-1850' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wolverhampton), 15; C.L. Fowler, 'Satisfying Popular Consumer Demand 1775-1815 with Specific Reference to the Dress trades in Hampshire' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Portsmouth, 1998), 4-6. For regional studies see: Helen Berry and Jeremy Gregory, 'Introduction', in *Creating and Consuming Culture in North-East England, 1660-1830* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Hannah Barker and Mina Ishizu, 'Inheritance and Continuity in Small Family Businesses During the Early Industrial Revolution', *Business History* 54, no. 2 (2012).

national and even international levels, commercially, socially and culturally and for women as well as men. An important aspect of the research involves determining the value of networking for women. Networks often complemented and overlapped one another, offering women widening opportunities to find spaces from which to use their voices at local, regional, national and even international level, and to extend their influence (see Appendix 3: Family Networks and Backgrounds).

This thesis covers the period between 1760 and 1860, but because the themed chapters run concurrently, as do the topics within them, there is no strong chronological format. Some women remained active for a long time, and their activities might extend beyond those of others in the same chapter. The main selection criterion was the existence of sufficient personal written testimony to allow for a detailed micro-history approach as described above. Other criteria included a middle-class background and a connection with Midland entrepreneurs and professionals. For this reason, there are no petty traders in the sample. The eighteen selected case studies meet the criteria and form the focus of this study, which, as well as addressing a considerable gap in the history of the entrepreneurial and professional families of the Midlands, also brings to light some unexpected aspects of women's lives in the period that contribute to research in the field. Any research, governed as it is by the survival of evidence, has an element of arbitrariness to it. This sample is based on the availability of written sources, with the demand for personal testimony narrowing selection to women who wrote about their experiences in, for example, letters and diaries. In that sense they might be seen as atypical, but for the fact that the thesis deals with the middle class, who generally ensured that women were literate and possessed of leisure time; time which was often occupied in writing. Many Quaker and Unitarian women were

identified, not unexpectedly, given that both sects had a tradition of reflective writing and of educating women. The selection of the sample represents a broad spectrum of the middle classes ranging from those merging with the gentry to those still running the family shop, and from those who lived quietly to those who entered public life.

The thesis seeks to maximise the use of personal sources such as correspondence and diaries, but also uses prescriptive sources for indications of shifting trends in social and cultural activities. This provides context to the experiences that emerge from the personal testimony. The compact nature of the middle-class world that these women inhabited is nowhere better seen than in personal testimony. The same names and events can appear in the letters, diaries and memoirs of different people. It might be suggested that all epistolary writing is a performance, and therefore subjective. Nevertheless, that very subjectivity can be interrogated for evidence of lived experiences. Equally, some family papers may have been heavily redacted for hagiographic memoirs intended to enhance family reputation. Women's papers were sometimes destroyed by their authors or by the family after death. Conversely, prosperous family businesses often had well preserved archives which held family correspondence providing cultural and social context to the lives of the women.

The following were consulted: three diaries, two personal memoirs, three autobiographies, eight reminiscences/biographies, one scrapbook and eleven letter collections. Also examined were published works by five of the women (see Appendix 2 for works by authors of Chapter 5). The records of the Female Society for Birmingham 1825-1869, which include annual reports, minutes, accounts and albums were consulted, as were twelve wills from the National archives together

with one inventory. The five newspapers examined were: *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* January 1790, July 1832, August 1840; *Bell's Weekly Messenger* August 1825; *Leicester Chronicle* 19 February 1842; *Leicester Journal* December 1829 and the *Northampton Mercury* December 1797.

Business Records and Letters

Simon-Martin suggests that letters are now 'understood as a site of struggle and empowerment'. This follows the introduction of post-modern linguistic readings, in which sub-texts in letters can produce suggestions of women's alternative lives.[75] Correspondence can therefore be an illuminating source for revealing the motives and methods of women who attempted to create meaningful roles and identities, especially in the face of pressure to live socially and culturally conventional lives, as reflected in prescriptive writing. Women's letters deposited in business archives usually receive little attention from economic historians, perhaps on the assumption that they were domestic in content or because historians, at least until the 1980s, were generally interested in 'great' men. Yet such letters can provide strong evidence of women's participation in business, as seen in the letters of Charlotte Matthews, Annie Watt and Elizabeth Shaw. Correspondence between Matthews and Matthew Boulton, for example, consists of five hundred and forty-seven letters. Economic historian Wiskin has researched Matthews' letters to show how women traders obtained financial credit, whereas this thesis looks at Matthews' efforts to build her social capital to maintain her status in the masculine world of finance.[76]

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[75] Simon-Martin, 'Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon's Travel Letters', 177-181.

[76] Boulton and Watt Collection, Birmingham Archives and Heritage (hereafter BAH); Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit'*, 250-2.*

The lengthy correspondence of the Watts, a mixture of business and domestic content, was used as a source by Jenny Uglow in her work on *The Lunar Men* but has been otherwise underused.[77] Popp has analysed the Shaw archive in detail, but this thesis concentrates on how Shaw and Watt combined their several roles and mediated the gendered conventions of the day.[78] The Shaw correspondence is found in two collections. The Shaw collection is held by the Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham. The Wilkinson collection, and the Shaw business correspondence, is held by Wolverhampton Archive. Anne Boulton's household accounts were a major source for Shena Mason's biography of her, and Ponsonby employed them for her survey of domestic interiors in *Stories from Home*.[79] This thesis compares an inventory of the Watts' house with eighty-five receipts and estimates from tradesmen in the domestic accounts of Boulton to establish contrasts in levels of comfort. The Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves produced professional accounts, and a large collection of records, including published annual reports, is preserved, revealing a surprising amount of involvement in consumption, as materials were purchased with which to make

[77] Uglow, *The Lunar Men, for example: 302, 313*.

[78] Shaw Collection, Cadbury Research Library; Wilkinson and Shaw Collection, Wolverhampton Archive and Library Services; Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families*.

[79] Shena Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter: Matthew Boulton and his 'Dear Girl' (*Chichester: Phillimore, 2005), *160-83;* Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 27-31.

saleable or charitable goods.[80] Clare Midgley employed these records in her survey of British anti-slavery, whereas this thesis considers the roles of the two founders, Lucy Townsend and Mary Lloyd, in creating what became a society of national and international standing, and how such experiences enabled women to develop their identities.[81]

Some entrepreneurial families such as the Boulton and the Watts, established family and business archives. Wealth provided the means of storage and preservation, and an archive could reflect dynastic aspirations, although the original intention could be foiled by later generations. Josiah Wedgwood's archive was sold for scrap by grandson Francis. By chance a local man, Joseph Mayer, found the collection in a Birmingham scrap yard, purchased and preserved it.[82] The comprehensive Wedgwood collection has been widely used in business and social history. Uglow, Brian Dolan and Robin Reilly have researched the archive for their Wedgwood biographies, but these concentrate mainly on men, whereas this thesis looks at

[80] 'Records of the Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves', Birmingham), MS 3173/1-4, BAH. The society had several name changes; for clarity this thesis refers to them all as the Female Society for Birmingham. Full archival references are shown in the bibliography.

[81] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1995, first published 1992).

[82] Wedgwood Collection, Wedgwood Archive, Barlaston; Robin Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 33.

family and business roles played by Sally Wedgwood, wife of Josiah I, and the business activities of the second-generation women.[83]

The Hutton collection of letters is small but significant, and has been employed anecdotally by many historians, including Davidoff and Hall, in work on broad themes of social history, Birmingham history and social manners.[84] Catherine Hutton's distant relative, Catherine Hutton Beale, featured many letters not in the public domain in her *Reminiscences*, and Audrey Duggan employed them, together with others in private hands, for her biography of Hutton.[85] Both works are particularly useful sources for analysing Hutton's motives for becoming an author and for establishing a reputation as a social conformist.

Diaries and other Personal Records

Diaries were written for many reasons; Sarah Florry's was for personal consumption, to give her comfort in her loneliness, whereas Abiah Darby used hers as an example to her descendants, creating a testimony of her religious vocation.[86]

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[83] Brian Dolan, *Josiah Wedgwood: Entrepreneur to the Establishment* (London: Harper, 2004); Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood;* Uglow, *The Lunar Men.*

[84] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

[85] Hutton Collection, BAH; Catherine Hutton Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century (*hereafter *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman)* (Birmingham: Cornish, 1891); Audrey Duggan, *A Lady of Letters: Catherine Hutton 1757-1846* (Studley: Brewin, 2000).

[86] Sarah Florry, 'Autobiography of Miss Florry, 1744-1812', MS 259854, BAH; Labouchere Collection, Ironbridge Gorge Museum and Library (hereafter

Authors of autobiographies and memoirs usually bring an agenda to their task, either to recover or enhance a reputation, or even to create one. This and the passage of time can make such records highly subjective, but when read in conjunction with other sources, especially the papers of other families, or commercial records and newspaper reports, the lives of these women become partially accessible. Examples of cross-references used in the thesis include the diaries or memoirs of Rebecca Kenrick and Elizabeth Galton.[87] Samples from these have been used by historians such as Davidoff and Hall as examples to illustrate broad themes of gender and class. In this thesis diaries are used to provide evidence of women's efforts to create their own identities. Two volumes of Kenrick's unpublished diary have survived and are employed here to establish motives for involvement in associational philanthropy. Galton's unpublished memoir, written in old age, shows her early upper middle-class life and the transition, following marriage, to relative poverty. Abiah Darby kept journals of her spiritual as well as family life. A biography containing her letters and diary extracts was written by a descendant, Rachel Labouchere, in the twentieth century.[88] The thesis uses this source and archive records to analyse Darby's strategy for developing her religious and political

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Ironbridge Archive); Rachel Labouchere, editor, *Abiah Darby 1716-1793 of Coalbrookdale: Wife of Abraham Darby II* (York: Sessions, 1988).

[87] 'Diaries of Rebecca Kenrick, 1839-1889', 2 vols, unpublished manuscript, Kenrick Collection, MS2024/1/1-2 1:12, BAH; Elizabeth Anne Galton, 'A Young Lady from Birmingham: Some Early Reminiscences of Elizabeth Anne Galton, (Mrs Edward Wheler), (1808-1906)', unpublished manuscript, MS 1199, BAH.

[88] Labouchere Collection, Ironbridge Archive; Labouchere, *Abiah Darby.*

activism. An auto/biography by Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck and her cousin and editor, Christina Hankin, was published shortly after Schimmelpenninck's death. She also carved out a unique identity, as her biography, letters and reports show, revealing a classic spiritual journey, through despair to spiritual fulfilment.[89] Susanna Watts' scrapbook, or common-place book, was mainly a record of her direct involvement in the anti-slavery campaign and brings much of the political context to life. This source is frequently used anecdotally but has also been used by anti-slavery historians such as Midgley. In this thesis the source is valuable in illuminating the many religious, philanthropic and literary preoccupations of Watts.[90]

Wills, such as those of the second-generation Wedgwood women, are used in the thesis to assess women's control over their own wealth and their efforts to avoid coverture.[91] Others, like that of Sarah Florry, reveal women's interest in the expanding world of consumption, showing the affective pleasure of ownership through elaborate instructions gifting items to friends and relations.[92] This confirms Marcia Pointon's theory that owners worded wills carefully because of their emotional investment in the willed goods. Some gave histories of the items, capturing the sense that they were regarded as repositories of personal emotions,

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[89] Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck,* edited by Christiana C. Hankin 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1858).

[90] 'Susanna Watts' Scrapbook', MS DE8170/1, Leicester Record Office.

[91] Will of Catherine Wedgwood dated 24 June 1822, proved 22 February 1824 Canterbury PRO, Prob11/1682/176, The National Archive (hereafter TNA).

[92] Will of Sarah Florry dated 7 May 1821, proved 26 June 1832, Canterbury PRO, Prob11/11801/142, TNA.

as memory banks. As Ponsonby has shown, emotions could be channelled into possessions, especially in times of hardship.[93] The picture is not complete, however, as wills do not show the value of property, such records being available in death duty registers. Inventories, in providing a snapshot of material goods, serve various purposes. Probate inventories were not required by ecclesiastical courts for assets after 1782 but continued in general use for purposes such as house moves, building work or following bankruptcy. One inventory is examined here, taken by Annie Watt at the time of a house move in 1791-2, and although possibly incomplete is still useful for assessing lifestyles of the period.[94]

Content

The aim of this thesis is to explore the identities of eighteen middle-class women, both as individuals and as relatives of the entrepreneurial and professional men of the Midlands between 1760 and 1860. It does so by considering five themes, to each of which is devoted a chapter: business, religion, philanthropy, domesticity and authorship.

Chapter 1 deals with the opportunities available to women in business and focuses on the experiences of Sally, wife of Josiah Wedgwood the Potter, and her daughters Sarah and Kitty; Sarah Florry, a never-married metal factor; widow and banker Charlotte Matthews; Elizabeth Shaw a metal factor, and Annie Watt, wife of engineer

[93] Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 3; Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, 11.

[94] Inventory of Heathfield House, 1791-1792, transcript, MS 3219/4/238, BAH.

James Watt. It examines examples of women who were in business to establish how they constructed roles and identities; their response when business competed with social and cultural expectations; and what the outcomes of those responses were. The first section deals with women and capital, examining the limitations surrounding women's control of, and access to, their own assets. The second section considers women as sole traders; assesses the importance of social capital; and examines how women merged their social and business lives to maintain credibility in the market place. The third section analyses the role of married women in family businesses and asks whether that business role was compromised by domestic duties or marital status.

Based on case studies of Abiah Darby, Quaker, Elizabeth Smith, Primitive Methodist, and Anglican Catherine Marsh, Chapter 2 investigates whether it was possible for women, through their own agency, to develop strong religious identities as women preachers, and questions the extent to which each denomination provided fertile ground and a positive reception for women's activities. It also assesses the role of networks in creating supportive communities within which the women could operate. This chapter further considers whether the religious activities of women preachers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left any kind of legacy for future generations.

Chapter 3 assesses what influence family and friendship networks had on women's philanthropic engagement, and what impact this had on their sense of identity. It focuses on three women for whom philanthropic activity was central to their identities: Quaker Mary Lloyd, Anglican Lucy Townsend and Unitarian Rebecca Kenrick. They lived between 1781 and 1891 and were active between the 1820s and the 1860s. The first section explores philanthropy in the context of female

friendships, while the second moves on to considering it in the context of family relationships, questioning the extent to which either enabled or hindered women's agency.

Chapter 4, which examines domesticity, will focus on objects, their acquisition, ownership and loss to examine how four women, of different circumstances and marital status, negotiated their way through domesticity and femininity: Elizabeth Wheler, daughter of wealthy Samuel Galton but married to an impoverished gentleman, Annie Watt (see above), Anne Boulton, daughter of Watt's partner, Matthew Boulton, and Catherine Hutton, daughter of William, Birmingham's first historian. The first section examines one woman's experiences of marriage and domesticity following her decision to marry a man with few financial resources, and her efforts to maintain her former status and identity. The second compares the different ways in which two friends furnished new homes for themselves and their motives for so doing, while the final examines a single woman's experiences of material and cultural loss, how that affected her sense of who she was, and how she found resolution.

Chapter 5 focuses on authorship, and explores the opportunities provided by writing and publication for women to create and build on their identities as authors. It considers the varied experiences of Catherine Hutton (see above), Susanna Watts, daughter of an impoverished gentleman, and Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, estranged aunt of Elizabeth Wheler. The first section follows the development of Hutton's authorial career, who began writing professionally at the age of fifty-four. The second considers the contradictions manifest in the authorship of Watts, who gave public service to her home town yet promoted her own radical views. The final section follows the progress of Schimmelpenninck, who set out to gain recognition

as an intellectual author and practitioner by engaging with aestheticism, scientific theories and religious politics. The three women considered here were very different but shared a goal to lead fulfilled lives. This thesis seeks to recover their efforts to shape their own identities.

Chapter 1: Business

Introduction

This chapter considers the extent to which the world of business was open to women in the period 1760 to 1860. By examining examples of women of the Midlands, those either born there or who made significant contributions to the region, it will establish how they constructed their roles and identities in business, their response when business competed with social and cultural expectations, and what the outcomes of those responses were. It also compares women's recorded experiences in business with later historical analysis on gender and identity to establish similarities and differentiations.[1] A particular emphasis of this chapter is

[1] For women's history and gender see, for example: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002; first published 1987); Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993). Joan Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986). For identity see: Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP, 2005); Henry French and Jonathan Barry, editors, *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004)*;* Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England in 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California (hereafter UCP), 1996); Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008, first published

how women combined their business activities with other roles to create their own identities in the context of social and cultural expectations. The use women made of networks to succeed in a business role are also of importance in understanding their experiences. The first part deals with women and capital, examining the limitations surrounding women's control of, and access to, their own assets, mainly through a study of two generations of women from the Wedgwood family. Sally Wedgwood, wife of Josiah Wedgwood and daughter of a wealthy merchant, helped establish the family ceramics business with her fortune; her two daughters, Sarah and Catherine, later effected an important beneficial intervention in the family business. The next section analyses the activities of female sole traders, assesses the importance of social capital and how women combined their social and business lives to maintain credibility in the market place. Unmarried Sarah Florry was a middle-class metal factor in Birmingham, whereas widow Charlotte Matthews was an upper middle-class banker to the successful Birmingham partnership of Matthew Boulton and James Watt. The third section examines the role of married women in family businesses and asks whether their business role was compromised by domestic duties or marital status. Elizabeth Shaw of Wolverhampton and Annie Watt of Handsworth, both from artisan and lower middle-class backgrounds, acted as agents for their husbands, John Shaw and James Watt, during their frequent absences on business.

1996); Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP) 1995).

This chapter argues that women's agency could be a powerful driver in promoting and sustaining successful businesses, and that by blending business and other roles women created their own identities as partners in these enterprises. The businesses were medium to large industrial enterprises, and one woman was a banker, but as the focus is on established entrepreneurial families there are no examples of petty traders. Motivation for these women is likely to have been primarily family or personal prosperity: the middle classes could be vulnerable to reversal in fortune, especially if capital was invested in the business or property was mortgaged. For some, business was a stimulating challenge, while others became involved only reluctantly, especially those with aspirations to join the gentry. The correspondence and autobiographies of women featured here show how such sources can provide valuable evidence of women's extensive business activities, yet such correspondence has often been neglected, with many historians concentrating on men as the drivers of business.[2] Exceptions include

[2] For male-centric history see: Eric Hopkins, *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World 1760-1840* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989); H.W. Dickinson, *Matthew Boulton* (Cambridge: CUP, 1936); Llewellyn Jewitt, *The Wedgwoods: being a Life of Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Virtue brothers, 1865). For working-class women see: Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (London: Virago, 1981, first published 1930); Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1992, first published in 1919). For studies of women in business and employment see: Hannah Barker, *Family and Business during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 2017); Amy Froide, *Silent Partners: Women as Public Investors during Britain's Financial*

Andrew Popp, who has studied the Shaw papers from a business perspective, and Christine Wiskin who has considered Matthews and Florry through the lens of economic history.[3] In considering whether roles were available to women within the business world it is perhaps significant that most of the examples shown here relate to the period up to the 1830s, when the ideology of gender separation was said to have become more influential.[4] However, this chapter will also consider other influences on the diminution of women's roles in business.

Revolution, 1690-1750 (Oxford: OUP, 2017); Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business 1700-1850* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006). For middle class women's exclusion from employment see: Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 308-15; Rozika Parker*, The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women's Press, 1996, first published 1984),147-158; Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto, 1973).

[3] Andrew Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families: Business, Marriage and Life in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012); Christine Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit in England, c. 1780-1826*',* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2000) [http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/36386, accessed 22 September 2014]; Wiskin, 'Accounting for Business: Financial Management in the Eighteenth Century', in *Women and their Money: 1700-1950,* edited by Ann Laurence, Josephine Maltby and Janette Rutterford, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, first published 2009).

[4] Davidoff and Hall*, Family Fortunes*, 272-315.

The businesses under scrutiny relate to the expansion of the Midland metal and ceramic trades in towns within the counties of Warwickshire and Staffordshire. Expanding manufacturing in Birmingham and the Black Country (the area north and west of Birmingham) exerted a centripetal force, drawing in workers. The population of Birmingham increased tenfold in a century, growing from 6,000 in 1700 to 74,000 by 1800.[5] The hallmark of Midland manufacturing, in contrast to the technologically-advanced Lancashire cotton mills, for example, was the employment of low fixed costs: small rented workshops and traditional tools were the norm. Hannah Barker points out that 'as late as 1871, the average manufacturing establishment had less than twenty employees'.[6] The realisation that industrial progress was probably more evolutionary and geographically variable than previously thought has provoked a revised understanding of the capital requirements of business. This revision, M. J. Daunton and others now broadly agree, shows that between 1700 and 1850 circulating or working capital and credit (for ongoing costs of raw materials and wages) were far more vital to the economy than was fixed capital (to purchase, for example, property, plant and

[5] Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 101.

[6] Hannah Barker, 'Women, Work and the Industrial Revolution: Female Involvement in the English Printing Trades, c.1700-1840', in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England,* edited by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Longman, 1997), 83-4; M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 131-33.

machinery).[7] Daunton, Hudson and Berg suggest that many may have used what they describe as a credit matrix through which, by 'inserting themselves into the local web of credit', firms could become net debtors initially, but in turn might become net creditors, extending credit to others and so expanding their markets.[8] This allowed businesses to begin trading with a modest outlay, and applied to women as well as men. Barker and Ishizu have shown how widows, for example, might calculate that a going concern would provide a higher income than proceeds from the sale of the business, and the availability of a web of local credit would inform such decisions.[9] In the Midlands, noted for the number of its small businesses, access to working capital and credit was the priority, along with the maintenance of low fixed costs.

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[7] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty,* 247; Pat Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1992), 14-25; Maxine Berg, Pat Hudson and Michael Sonenscher, editors, *Manufacture in Town and Country before the Factory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), 5; Pat Hudson, 'Financing Firms, 1700-1850', in *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain: From the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century,* edited by Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (London: Routledge, 1994), 88-9.

[8] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 247; Hudson, 'Financing Firms', 93; Berg *et al*, *Manufacture in Town and Country*, 5-6.

[9] Barker, *Family and Business*, 38-42, 103-7; Hannah Barker and Mina Ishizu, 'Inheritance and Continuity in Small Family Businesses during the Early Industrial Revolution', *Business History* 54, no. 2 (2012): 239; Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830* (Oxford: OUP, 2006),108-15.

Establishing a larger business could be more problematic between 1720 and 1856 when the Bubble Act of 1720 was in force, making limited liability beyond the reach of most enterprises. Partners could be exposed to unlimited liability in the event of business failure, and trust among them was therefore paramount.[10] With an economy that was regional rather than national, networks of kinship, religious or social affiliation were often the investors of choice for businesses seeking capitalisation and credit, as they formed 'a web of trust'.[11] The safest source of funds was the immediate family, with the trusts and dowries of women being particularly attractive. It remains to be seen whether women played an active role in these networks.

Women, Capital and Autonomy

The experiences of the women of the Wedgwood and Boulton families provide illustrations of family businesses underpinned both by female capital and the networks essential to business growth in the eighteenth century. This section examines the limitations surrounding women's control of, and access to, their own assets. For single women and widows with direct access to their capital, investments could be made freely. Those whose money was held in trust might have access to all or part of the interest, but trustees generally controlled capital

[10] For the Bubble Act see Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 238-9.

[11] Mary Rose, 'The Family Firm in British Business, 1780-1914', in *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain,* 75; Hudson, 'Financing Firms', 90, 107; Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 253; see also: Ann Prior and Maurice Kirby, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm', in *Business History* 35, no.4 (1993).

investment, and decisions were not always disinterested. The main benefit to women was that capital in trust was protected from creditors if the business failed.[12] Following marriage, coverture came into force, creating a loss of legal identity for women for the duration of the marriage, affecting property rights, the power to make a will, enter into contracts or pursue a legal action, although Margot Finn's analysis of county court cases shows that women did seek redress in law.[13] Not all men chose to exercise those rights and, as Maxine Berg observes, women often 'had an important part in the decisions about the disposition of family wealth'.[14] To protect a woman's estate, her birth family might create a marriage settlement containing a trust; without one a husband had rights over his wife's property and her liquid assets, including earned income; interest or profits from investments became his immediately.[15]

However, as Berg, Barker and Ishizu have demonstrated, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, despite their legal invisibility, women ran inherited family businesses, bequeathed property, arranged trusts and acted as executors,

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[12] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 244-5.

[13] Margot Finn, 'Women, Consumption and Coverture in England, c. 1760-1860', *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 3 (1996): 720-22; see also: Amy Louise Erickson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993); Peter Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 42, no. 3 (1989).

[14] Berg, 'Women's Property and the Industrial Revolution', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24, no. 2 (1993): 248-50.

[15] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty,* 68, 244.

showing an acute understanding of the advantages of equity law.[16] On the other hand, Davidoff and Hall maintain that legal devices such as trusts were manifestly part of the middle-class masculine assertion of control over women's assets, which increased with the repeal of dower in 1833, after which wives lost absolute inheritance rights.[17] All agree, however, that there was considerable unevenness in these patterns over time and place. By the nineteenth century common law increasingly predominated in English courts, limiting women's opportunities for legal redress before the passing of the Married Women's Property Act of 1870.[18] Phillips cautions against taking legal commentaries literally; case law in this period could both alter interpretation of statutory law and itself be reinterpreted. This led to incremental judicial changes which, she argues, had more impact in women's favour than the dearth of legislative reform prior to 1870 might suggest.[19]

Sally Wedgwood (née Wedgwood) (1734-1815)

Early Years

In 1764, Josiah Wedgwood wrote to his partner Thomas Bentley outlining his future father-in-law's resistance to his intended marriage to his cousin Sally: 'our Papa, over careful of his daughter's interest wo'd … go near to separate us if we were not better determined'.[20] Sarah Wedgwood, known as Sally, was the

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[16] Barker and Ishizu, 'Inheritance and Continuity', 239; Berg, 'Women's Property and the Industrial Revolution', 248-50.

[17] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 209-15.

[18] Erickson, *Women & Property,* 5-6.

[19] Phillips, *Women in Business*, 46.

[20] Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 9 January 1764, MS E25-18057, Wedgwood Museum Archive (hereafter WMA), Barlaston.

daughter of Richard Wedgwood, a wealthy merchant and banker. Josiah Wedgwood had set up on his own as a potter in 1759 with only £10 working capital and the tenancy of a small pot-work in Burslem, Staffordshire. He was thirty-four before he could prove his financial ability and the marriage could go ahead, by which time the business had grown and employed about fifteen workmen. Despite his earlier resistance, there is no evidence that Richard took steps to shelter his daughter's fortune of £4,000 in a trust.[21] This was not unknown; Archibald Kenrick was allowed to use his wife's £500 annual allowance from her father to fund his West Bromwich manufactory.[22] Certainly, Wedgwood expanded his business almost immediately following marriage, suggesting that he had access to his wife's capital. The purchase of an experimental lathe increased production dramatically, and within a decade the company employed three hundred men.[23] By marrying, Josiah Wedgwood had accessed capital through familial networks, part of the 'web of trust'.

In 1774 and 1782 respectively Sally Wedgwood inherited the estates of her brother and father, said to be worth £20,000, all of which would have come under

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[21] Barbara Wedgwood and Hensleigh Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle, 1730-1897* (Ontario: Collier Macmillan, 1980), 11; Jewitt, *The Wedgwoods*, 157.

[22] R. A. Church*, Kenricks in Hardware: A Family Business 1791-1966* (New York: Kelley, 1969), 30.

[23] Robin Reilly, 'Wedgwood, Josiah (1730-1795)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*), OUP. 2004: online edition, May 2009; http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28966,accessed 11 April 2013.

her husband's control.[24] This no doubt also funded an expensive move into the ownership of shares in canals and turnpikes, raising Wedgwood's public profile as a county man of some substance.[25] In similar ways many other women contributed significantly to commerce in this period. As Chalkin has shown, women's investments made up 20% of loan capital traded in late eighteenth-century towns.[26] Women could also be astute investors, Amy Froide argues, including on behalf of husbands and brothers.[27] By 1768, Wedgwood began to invest capital in fixed assets, building at Burslem, Staffordshire, a new factory 'Etruria', and a country house, Etruria Hall.[28] Reilly concludes that with insufficient funds from the business and no record of interest payments, the estimated £9,660 expenditure was probably funded by his wife's fortune.[29] The decision to build Etruria Hall suggests that while business itself is often perceived as the spur to entrepreneurial

[24] Robin Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 36; Jewitt, *The Wedgwoods,* 157.

[25] Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 16 February 1767, MS E25-18183, WMA; Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood*, 46-9.

[26] C.W. Chalkin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: A Study of the Building Process 1740-1820* (Ontario: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974), 242.

[27] Froide, *Silent Partners, 93-150.*

[28] Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, (no day) June 1768, MS E25-18199, WMA.

[29] Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood*, 58-9.

success, as Alistair Owens has shown, for many industrial families the business was a means to one end: the benefit of the family.[30]

Cultural Adviser

Sally Wedgwood's approval of the expenditure of her fortune is seen in her role overseeing the house design and its furnishing.[31] This significant event restored the high status she had enjoyed before her marriage, and also extended it to her children.[32] Erasmus Darwin, their doctor, friend and fellow member with Josiah of the Lunar Society, thought the house 'fit for a prince'.[33] Shrewdly, Sally Wedgwood also suggested the best ceramics be exhibited in the house, encouraging further acquisitions by their wealthy customers.[34] This is an interesting development at a time when politeness and privacy were leading the wealthier middle-class to separate home and work spaces.[35] It suggests that Sally Wedgwood had aspirations to return to the gentry lifestyle of her youth, and that she was, in the tradition of the gentry, throwing open her house to visitors. Rather than emulating

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[30] Alastair Owens, 'Inheritance and the Life-Cycle of Family Firms in the Early Industrial Revolution', *Business History* 44, no. 1 (2002): 41.

[31] Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 11 November 1769, MS E25-18268, WMA.

[32] Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood*, 37; Brian Dolan, *Josiah Wedgwood: Entrepreneur to the Establishment* (London: Harper, 2004), 244.

[33] Dolan, Ibid., 249. For the Lunar Society see: Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future* (London: Faber, 2002).

[34] Dolan, Josiah Wedgwood, 354.

[35] Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 125.

gentry, she anticipated that they, in purchasing Wedgwood ceramics, would be emulating her. In 1775 her opinion on the drawing room reveals her confidence: 'I think a pair of Vase candlesticks on the chimney and a pair of silver ones on the table quite enough for that room'.[36] Whether it was, as Veblen and Simmel suggested in their classic studies, the conspicuous consumption of the rich that drove the expansion of consumption or not, it is clear that the business, assisted by Sally Wedgwood's money and input on taste and marketing, produced a seemingly endless variety of exciting and original decorative ceramics for wealthy clients like Lord Gower and his friends, who came to Burslem to view and buy.[37]

Wedgwood was paralleled in fortune and success by his friendly business rival and Lunar Society associate Matthew Boulton, who controversially married two sisters, wealthy heiresses, in succession. The second sister, Anne (1733-1783), inherited a total of £48,000, mainly from her sister Mary (1727-1759), which Boulton used to expand his business, building the iconic Soho Manufactory in Birmingham in 1761.[38] The women's level of involvement in the business is

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[36] Sally Wedgwood to unknown correspondent, 14 March 1775, MS L95- 17651.A, WMA.

[37] Josiah Wedgwood to John Wedgwood, 7 August 1765, MS E25-18089, WMA. For early theories on conspicuous consumption see: Georg Simmel, 'Fashion', *American Journal of Sociology 62*, no. 6 (1957); T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Dover 1994, first published 1899).

[38] Rita McLean, 'Introduction: Matthew Boulton, 1728-1809', in *Matthew Boulton, Selling what all the World Desires,* edited by Shena Mason (London: Yale University

unknown, but as major underwriters of the enterprise it is reasonable to assume that they would take some interest in the progress of the business. Arguably, through such interest, they would form some sense of their own role in the company, and by that, an identity for themselves as investors in business. This should not be assumed with any certainty, but some possibility is allowable, especially as, with no trust to protect them, failure would have been disastrous. In contrast, the Wedgwood correspondence shows that Sally Wedgwood was very much a part of the business, her role no less important for the absence of public recognition. As Alison Kay, Nicola Phillips and Amanda Vickery observe, much could be achieved by women in business, even when working within or around the social and legal constraints of their age.[39]

Additionally, women were not necessarily focused on only one aspect of their domestic or business lives. So, in the early days, conscious of Josiah's fear of industrial espionage, Sally Wedgwood taught herself his coded shorthand to speed up his glazing experiments. 'She hath learnt my characters', he told his brother.[40] In this way, in between pregnancy and child-rearing, she contributed to

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Press (hereafter YUP), 2009), 2-3; Mason, '"The Hôtel d'amitié sur Handsworth Heath": Soho House and the Boultons' in *Matthew Boulton,* 15; Uglow, *The Lunar Men*, 67.

[39] Alison Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship: Enterprise, Home and Household in London, c. 1800-1870 (*Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 134; Phillips, *Women in Business*, 256; Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*: *Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London: YUP, 1999), 11.

[40] Josiah Wedgwood to John Wedgwood, 6 March 1765, MS E25-18070, WMA.

the revolutionary development of the Wedgwood ceramics, a role which offered some control over what were, in effect, her assets, albeit it in the possession of her husband following marriage. She also visited London and attended the House of Commons. As she told Bentley, Josiah Wedgwood's partner, with whom she shared cultural interests, 'I am deeply enter'd into politicks'.[41] The business was dependent on fashionable patronage and the ability to produce novel wares that could command attention for their elegance and good taste, and McKendrick gives Wedgwood the credit for this.[42] However, it was Sally Wedgwood, with her cultured background and knowledge of society, who initially employed her cultural capital in the interests of the business. She advised on which wares would be attractive to society women and on the layout of the London showroom.[43] In letters to Bentley, Wedgwood acknowledged his debt to his wife: 'I speak from experience in Female taste, without which I should have made but a poor figure amongst my Potts, not one of which of any consequence, is finished without the Approbation of my Sally'.[44]

Sally Wedgwood established a role in the family enterprise as more than a source of capital and created a multi-layered identity for herself defined through her

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[41] Sally Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 8 December 1768, in Dolan, *Josiah Wedgwood, 246-7.*

[42] N. McKendrick, 'Josiah Wedgwood: An Eighteenth-Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques', *The Economic History Review* n.s. 12, no. 3 (1960), 431-33.

[43] Uglow, *The Lunar Men*, 86.

[44] Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 16 February 1767, MS E25-18183, WMA.

business, social and domestic roles. Her ambition seems to have been the restoration of her family's former gentry status. Having largely achieved this ambition, the next section will question whether her daughters had the same opportunities to engage with the business. Susanna, Katherine (known as Kitty) and Sarah were brought up as ladies of leisure, but although they did not need to earn a living, this did not preclude them from taking an active interest in the business.

Sarah Wedgwood (1776-1856), Catherine (Kitty) Wedgwood (1774-1823)

Women's Capital and the Family Business

When Wedgwood died in 1794 he left an estimated half a million pounds, making his children wealthy.[45] His wife received the income from a £10,000 trust; she was an executor and had a veto on where the capital was invested. This was not unusual; according to Berg, women in this period accounted for 30.4% of executors and guardians in Birmingham between 1700 and 1800, and Erickson confirms similar patterns in the early eighteenth century.[46] The three daughters, of whom the eldest, Susanna, was married to Dr Robert Darwin, were each left £25,000 unconditionally.[47] This suggests that Wedgwood recognised the autonomy of his daughters, and perhaps mindful that his success derived considerably from his wife's dowry, was offering the same opportunity to his

[45] Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood*, 342.

[46] Berg, 'Women's Property and the Industrial Revolution', 238; Erickson, *Women & Property*, 156-61.

[47] Will of Josiah Wedgwood, dated 2 November 1795, proved 2 July 1795, Canterbury PRO11/1264/14, The National Archives (hereafter TNA).

daughters' present and potential husbands. Matthew Boulton, contrastingly, left his daughter Anne (1768-1829) assets of £34,000 in trust for, as Boulton told his solicitor, he needed to 'protect her from all Disputes with her Brother, who is not kindly disposed towards her'.[48] He allowed half of her estate to be used by a future husband, but ensured that she and any future children retained the rest.[49] Boulton was more astute than Wedgwood in this respect.

Wedgwood's three sons had been made partners in the pottery firm in 1790, though there was no suggestion that the three girls would enter the business.[50] The sons in fact preferred to see themselves as gentry, like their mother, but they lacked Sally's practicality. Josiah II inherited the estate and the factory; his father having purchased the eldest son John a banking partnership some years before. Within months of Josiah I's death in 1795 all three sons had left Staffordshire, later buying country estates in the south.[51] This 'flight from business', according to the Buddenbrooks theory, usually occurs in the third generation, but here can be seen in the second.[52] However, Alastair Owens argues persuasively that 'the institution of the family needs to be seen less as an influence on business activity and more

[48] Matthew Boulton to Ambrose Weston, MS 3782/13/48/15.

[49] Shena Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter: Matthew Boulton and his 'Dear Girl*' (Chichester: Phillimore, 2005), 132.

[50] Wedgwood and Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle*, 95.

[51] Ibid., 105-6, 114.

[52] For the Buddenbrooks' theory see Rose, 'The Family Firm in British Business', 73-5.

as its raison d'être'.[53] Nor was the younger generation's move to estates and rentier income entirely unjustified economically; the threat of war with France and civil unrest made land, arguably, a longer-term investment. After a ten-year absence, Josiah II returned to rescue an ailing business, complaining to his brother 'the business is now not worth carrying on, and if I could withdraw my capital from it, I would tomorrow'.[54] Reilly identifies the mismanagement of the partners as the greatest threat to the business; all the brothers had borrowed against the firm, which itself owed £48,679, twice its estimated value.[55] As a consequence, Josiah I's estate had still not been settled by 1805; his daughters had not received their legacies, and were instead being paid 5% interest by the firm.[56] Clearly, it was not only husbands who posed a threat to the security of women's legacies.

Had the partners been made bankrupt during this challenging time, the sisters' money, with no trust to protect it, would have been lost. However, it becomes clear from correspondence that the two unmarried daughters' grasp of the financial situation was superior to that of their brothers. Lemire has shown how accounting procedures revolutionised the domestic households of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Wedgwood had insisted on all his children receiving

[53] Owens, 'Inheritance and the Life-Cycle of Family Firms', 43.

[54] Josiah Wedgwood II to John Wedgwood, November 1811, in Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood*, 346.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Wedgwood and Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle*, 134.

lessons in accounting.[57] Like their mother, the girls were competent financial managers. However, the eldest son John was 'incurably extravagant', always looking to the company to clear his debts, and Josiah II was also in debt to the business.[58] Realising the company difficulties, Catherine and Sarah Wedgwood instigated an offer of help. Sarah wrote to Josiah II: 'Kitty has been observing that you ought not to give us five per cent'. They suggested it be reduced to four.[59] When their mother died in 1815 she left John a legacy in trust, with the two sisters as trustees, indicating her confidence in their financial ability.[60] In 1816, with the bank in which John was a partner at continual risk of collapse, he sought further financial assistance from the family business. Sarah wrote to Josiah II: 'If there is a probable chance of £5,000 being of any use in this emergency Kitty and I should be very glad to advance it without security, but we must leave it to you to

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[57] Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 23 November 1779, MS E26-18939, WMA; Josiah Wedgwood, 'A timetable for teaching at his domestic "Etruscan School"', MS E26-18946, in Ann Finer and George Savage, editors, *The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Cory, Adams and Mackay, 1965), 246-7; Beverly Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life: Gender, Practice and Social Politics in England c.1600-1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press (hereafter MUP), 2005), 190.

[58] Reilly, *Josiah Wedgwood*, 345; Josiah Wedgwood II to John Wedgwood, 17 February 1821, in Wedgwood and Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle,* 149.

[59] Ibid., 165.

[60] Copy will of Sarah Wedgwood dated 6 August 1779, SD4842/14/3/5, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archives, Hanley.

determine whether in that case it would be better to risk it or to keep it to assist John with'.[61] The women were in no doubt that keeping the money back was the best option, but tactfully allowed Josiah II, head of the family, to make the final decision not to invest. The bank was taken over, avoiding scandal, but the Wedgwoods lost nearly £10,000. Two further trusts for John, also set up at the sisters' instigation, then followed.[62]

Business Identity

Sarah and Kitty Wedgwood demonstrated more than family loyalty in these transactions; they showed considerable insight into company finances and the need to prevent further capital haemorrhage. What this suggests is that although lacking formal responsibility in the company they had a keen sense of identity with it and, like the Birmingham women Berg identified, negotiated gender barriers to play a crucial role.[63] That role was also vital to their own finances as unmarried women. Their brother-in-law Robert Darwin, an astute investor himself, summed up the situation saying of Kitty Wedgwood: 'she thought more clearly than almost anyone he knew, man or woman'.[64] With the confidence to offer solutions to their brother for handling financial crises they demonstrated their autonomy within the family business, albeit ones that required considerable financial sacrifice on their part. Kitty's will demonstrates the same foresight as that of her mother. Leaving

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[61] Sarah Wedgwood to Josiah Wedgwood II, c. July 1816, in Wedgwood and Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle*, 178.

[62] Wedgwood and Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle*, 188.

[63] Berg, 'Women's Property and the Industrial Revolution', 249.

[64] Wedgwood and Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle*, 157.

John an annuity of £80 a year, she attached strict directions that he could not 'anticipate, mortgage, alienate sell or appoint charge or in any manner encumber' the annuity. If he did, then the legacy would pass to his wife and children. Interestingly, she also instructed that legacies for women under coverture were 'for their own separate use benefit and disposal'.[65]

Kitty's will sheds light on the silence surrounding the use of women's money within families. Family loyalty and the fear of scandal which could, of course, also destroy the credit of the business, was paramount to the Wedgwoods, and this acted as a powerful secondary coverture, ensuring that the women did not take steps to claim their rightful legacies, even as their brothers effectively spent them on their own estates. Matthew Boulton understood that when he left his daughter money out of her brother's reach. Kitty and Sarah Wedgwood and Anne Boulton remained single, making family ties crucial to them and ensuring that silence over money became even more important. In contrast, Mary Ann Schimmelpenninck (1778-1856), was persuaded by her father Samuel Galton to hand over to him control of the considerable fortune, left to her by her grandfather, when she married.[66] Mary Anne, whose family were wealthy Midland gun-makers and bankers, knew the Wedgwood and Boulton women as the men were friends and founders of the Lunar Society and the families socialised together. When Schimmelpenninck's husband ran into financial difficulty, her father declined to give her access to what

[65] Will of Catherine Wedgwood dated 24 June 1822, proved 23 February 1824, Canterbury PRO, Prob11/1682/176, TNA.

[66] Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck,* edited by Christiana C. Hankin, (London: Longman, 1858). 2:74.

was, in effect, her money. The Schimmelpennincks sought an informal arbitration of 'friends and family connections', and in 1811 a compromise was reached.[67] But Mary Ann paid a high price: her family cut her off, a source of lasting pain to her. It is not known whether being married strengthened Schimmelpenninck's resolve, or whether pressure was applied by her husband to take the course that she did, but the fear of kinship estrangement probably exerted a more powerful influence on single women, whose lives often remained bound up with their birth families. Only after death did Kitty and Sarah Wedgwood and Mary Ann Schimmelpenninck demonstrate their independence, by leaving money in trust, and inserting clauses negating coverture. By the terms of their wills they all expressed confidence in trusts as a preferable means of protecting legatees' incomes and asserted autonomy over the money that was rightfully theirs.[68]

The examples analysed show parallels with the conclusions of Barker, Berg, Phillips and Davidoff and Hall on women's independent access to capital. Sally Wedgwood and the Boulton sisters lost control over their capital but the investments turned out to be successful. The Wedgwood sisters and Schimmelpenninck were victims, as Davidoff and Hall asserted, of demonstrations of masculine power, though without legal underpinning in the Wedgwood case, as the brothers were not trustees, they simply usurped the fortunes of their sisters.

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[67] Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck,* 2: 75.

[68] Will of Sarah Wedgwood, dated 9 January 1851, proved 27 November 1856, Canterbury PRO, Prob11/2242/278, TNA; will of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck dated 25 September 1806, proved 24 September 1856, Canterbury PRO, Prob 11/2239/220, TNA.

Schimmelpenninck regained control of her money at considerable cost, which none but the strongest women would have risked, leaving most powerless and silent. Nicola Phillips argues that rather than interpreting legal restrictions on women's activities solely as legal questions, they should be seen as an 'extremely imperfect interaction between law, society and economy'.[69] While this is undoubtedly true, this chapter also suggests that many cases of misappropriation of women's assets never reached the courts, denying those women who put family loyalty first, or feared retribution, the chance of redress.

This overview of the Wedgwood family reveals a generational move towards less physical involvement with business as the family flourished, but in terms of financial autonomy the cycle of change was based on personal experience rather than linear progression. As testators, Kitty and Sarah Wedgwood judiciously left legacies to the third generation both in trust and unconditionally and pro-actively subverted coverture. These sisters demonstrated an understanding of the family business often exceeding that of their brothers. They created identities from an amalgamation of their family and business roles, developed through being major investors, financial brokers and part of a close family. Their interventions had a lasting beneficial effect, on the family and business, if not on themselves, and confirm their identities as decisive women of commerce and business.

The Influence of Social Capital

This section analyses the activities of female sole traders, assesses the importance of social capital and of how women combined their social and business

[69] Phillips, *Women in Business*, 28.

lives to maintain credibility in the market place. Business credit could be more valuable than capital, for reasons already outlined. Resourceful small and medium traders, for example, could negotiate credit with suppliers, reducing the need for significant capital. However, for the period under consideration it would be simplistic to view business-related credit as simply a matter of finance. Society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries measured creditworthiness by character, possession of which conferred social capital on the would-be borrower. Manifestations of social capital included appearance, verbal faculty, social status, connections, and reputation within the community.[70] These indicators, unstable and unreliable as they might have been, were taken seriously by traders and businesses. Finn describes ledgers kept from 1857 by wholesale grocer James Budgett, in which clerks assiduously recorded the estimated moral and economic worth of their customers,[71] while Samuel Smiles insisted that 'Character is Property'.[72] Borrowers plied their credentials, real or imaginary, before creditors; creditors sought to establish their trustworthiness with assessments often based on gossip and conjecture. For an honest trader, behaviour giving rise to gossip and scandal, especially concerning debt default, was to be avoided at all costs. That, and the fear of imprisonment for debt, were the twin pillars of the credit economy.[73]

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[70] Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 20.

[71] Ibid., 301

[72] Samuel Smiles, *Character* (London: Create Space, 2013, first published 1871), 5.

[73] Finn, *The Character of Credit*, 102.

Unlimited liability before 1862 cast a long shadow over the world of business partnerships, and networks of trust were vital in maintaining confidence. Credit patterns and the definition of respectability varied across the country and even within a county, as Pat Hudson shows in her study of the Yorkshire West Riding woollen industry.[74] Nationwide, family networks operating on an informal clientage model, were influential: 'Familial enterprise', Mary Rose observes, 'by ensuring a degree of trust within firms, represented a business strategy designed to combat external uncertainty'.[75] However, the usefulness of business networks and clusters could be limited, as Popp and others have shown, especially when dominated by vested interests.[76] Ultimately, for those who worked outside such networks, social capital remained essential. In 1796 Matthew Boulton of Birmingham was asked by local businessmen Gee & Egerton to guarantee them to a banker for £600 after their bankers Taylor and Lloyd refused to extend credit. When Gee and Egerton

[74] Pat Hudson, 'Capital and Credit in the West Riding Wool Textile Industry c. 1750-1850', in *Regions and Industries: a Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain*, edited by Pat Hudson (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 80-96.

[75] Rose, 'The Family Firm in British Business', 67.

[76] Andrew Popp and John Wilson, 'Life Cycles, Contingency, and Agency: Growth, Development, and Change in English Industrial Districts and Clusters', *Environment and Planning A* (2007):39; Francesca Carnevali, '"Malefactors and Honourable Men": The Making of Commercial Honesty in Nineteenth-Century Industrial Birmingham', in *Industrial Clusters and Regional Business Networks in England 1750-1970,* edited by John F. Wilson and Andrew Popp (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 206-7.

offered Boulton the bond of three wealthy gentlemen he recommended them to his banker Charlotte Matthews, describing one guarantor as 'a large and opulent manufacturer in Birmingham of very respectable character, and I know he is rich'.[77] Here, Boulton gambled on his judgment: social capital won the day and Gee and Egerton unlocked the door to a new line of finance. But how easy was it for women in business to obtain credit?

Sarah Florry (1744-1832)

Character and Credit

Women had long been associated with debt in fiction and satire. Kowaleski-Wallace sees this as eighteenth-century society's love and fear of the power of consumerism projected onto the female subject.[78] It might therefore be expected that women would find it difficult to negotiate credit in business. Yet Christine Wiskin mounts a persuasive argument against gender bias in business in this period.[79] Far more important, she suggests, was a person's standing in the community, and a reputation for honouring credit arrangements. However, to begin trading individuals needed to prove trustworthiness, and for that they needed social capital. One such woman was Birmingham metal factor Sarah Florry, who began trading independently in 1769 at the age of twenty-five. Metal factors were

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[77] Matthew Boulton to Charlotte Matthews, 7 March 1796, MS 3782/12/68/167, BAH.

[78] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 4-5..

[79] Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit*',* 151, 243-87; see also: Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 5.

wholesalers, centralising and distributing metal to a broad customer base. Forged metal purchased from iron masters was supplied to metal manufacturers, although some metal factors assembled metal goods or, like John Shaw, serviced retail ironmongers. Metal factors contributed greatly to the expansion of Midland manufacturing, especially the toy trade, their number increasing in Birmingham from eighty-five in 1777 to 175 in 1815.[80] According to Clive Behagg, factoring was among the most prosperous of the Birmingham trades.[81] Florry's autobiography indicates her awareness of the benefits of social capital to her business.[82] Her source of initial finance is unknown, but it is likely she began with minimum capital and astute use of the local credit matrix.[83]

Initially, Florry occupied lodgings, which suggests limited resources or ongoing investment in the business, but she soon rented a house and warehouse. Lodgers provided another income stream, and as two were her male clerks this not only reduced her wage bill but also ensured their loyalty.[84] Florry thus used her property as an asset to expand her business. More importantly, as Smiles had observed, being a householder enhanced her reputation in the business

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[80] Eric Hopkins, *Birmingham*, 13, 68.

[81] Clive Behagg, *Politics and Production in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1990), 30.

[82] Sarah Florry, 'Autobiography', 1744-1812, 9, MS 259854, BAH (hereafter Florry, 'Autobiography').

[83] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 247; Hudson, 'Financing Firms', 93; Berg et al, *Manufacture in Town and Country*, 5-6.

[84] Florry, 'Autobiography', 9.

community, increasing access to credit. In her autobiography, Florry recalled being brought up 'flattered with the prospect of great affluence from my Father'.[85] But John Florry, an ironmaster, and friend of James and Annie Watt, moved to Cleobury in 1769, possibly following a reversal in fortune. A member of the influential metal trade association and a tenant of the Earl of Dartmouth, he probably provided his daughter with letters of introduction to influential people such as Samuel Garbett, who lobbied Parliament for the Midland metal trade association.[86] Sarah Florry knew Garbett's friend Matthew Boulton; she recorded in 1798 that 'Mr Boulton pays the Copper Co. 2000£ p.week'.[87] Her social acquaintances included the Sparrows, a family of influential metal factors. One of her closest friends was Lady Holte of Aston Hall, with whom she spent considerable time.[88] Florry was building up her business networks and social capital.

Expansion

The business quickly expanded and Florry increased her workforce using journeymen to visit customers, one job she could not do herself without transgressing social etiquette.[89] One of them, William Walker, she later took on as

[85] Florry, 'Autobiography', 3.

[86] J. M. Norris, 'Samuel Garbett and the Early Development of Industrial Lobbying in Great Britain', *Economic History Review* n.s., 10, no. 3 (1958): 452.

[87] Florry, 'Autobiography', 51.

[88] Ibid., 58, 7.

[89] Ibid., 11.

a partner c.1773.[90] Phillips has shown how milliners used advertisements to stress their gentility, a necessary prerequisite for attracting 'quality' to the shop and to refute the popular link between milliners and sexual impropriety.[91] Operating in the metal trade, Florry must have calculated it was more important to show her continuing authority to her male customers, and probably to Walker as well, by trading and advertising the company as 'Messrs. Florry and Walker' in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*. In placing her name first and using the masculine nominative in the advert, Florry publicly announced herself as the senior partner.[92] In December 1798 the partnership was dissolved and Walker took over the business.[93] However, further investment as a shareholder from 1789 to 1801 along with others such as Ann Webster and William Walker in brass and copper companies (set up at Matthew Boulton's initiative to break a monopoly), demonstrates Florry's continuing business acumen.[94] Clive Behagg estimates that the Birmingham Brass Company, typical in the region, allowed shareholders five hundredweight of brass per share, per quarter, which suggests Florry had metalware factors and manufacturers, possibly including Matthew Boulton, willing

[90] Ibid., 20, 23.

[91] Phillips, *Women in Busines*s, 219-222.

[92]Advertisement, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* 11 January 1790, quoted in Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 95-6.

[93] Florry, 'Autobiography', 60.

[94] Ibid., 55; Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 173, 185, 278.

to buy her stock.[95] This could also earn her further social capital as many investors, like Boulton, were wealthy and well-connected. Amy Froide has shown that women invested in public and government securities in their later years to provide a more 'timely, secure, and liquid savings', a less profitable but more secure return than was usually possible with business, mortgages and rents. Florry, however, preferred investments she understood, such as the lucrative brass foundry and a copper company.[96] The various difficulties that Sarah Florry overcame proved her resilience in business and indicated the strength of her networks and social capital. Her father struggled financially in his Cleobury business and she was required to assist him, recording in 1773: 'Every quarter day miserable on account of my father's affairs and the weight of my own'.[97] Her partner Walker tried to wrest the business from her and cheated her more than once as she notes in 1799: 'Astonished and disappointed at Acct of Mr Walker deduct^{s} - ½ my Income from Copper and Brass works this year!'[98] There were bad debts, staff defected to other companies and the brass foundry lost £1,000 through the fraudulent behaviour of the manager, which resulted in a court case.[99] Another business woman in Birmingham known to Florry, Ann Salt, a merchant, became

[95] Entry July 1799, 'Mr Boulton pays Copper Co. 2000£ per week'. Florry, 'Autobiography', 51. Behagg, *Politics and Production*, 54-5.

[96] Froide, *Silent Partners*, 118-121.

[97] Florry, 'Autobiography', 13.

[98] Ibid., 16-17, 39, 82.

[99] Ibid., 34; for court case see Rotton v. Davis 1801: MS 211/1, BAH; Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 5.

bankrupt in 1796 when further credit was denied her because she broke the terms of a bond, then considered a serious failure of business best practice.[100] Florry, however, was prudent and understood the essential value of cultural and social capital in maintaining confidence among creditors. Records show that Taylor and Lloyd extended her and a partner, Mary Conquest, a substantial loan of £400 in 1820, even though Florry was, by then, seventy-six years old.[101]

Davidoff and Hall suggest that 'mechanical skills, the heart of the Birmingham metal industry, were clearly outside the rubric of the feminine sphere' yet, as a metal factor, Florry engaged closely with this masculine world.[102] Her genteel upbringing and the heavily industrialised nature of metal factoring may seem incompatible, and the idea of a middle-class woman in such a coarse environment would have shocked writers of women's advice literature. Despite being engaged personally in the commercial rather than the physical aspect of the business, she worked from her warehouse, which bought, stored and distributed heavy metal. Florry, however, handled this dichotomy with ease, moving smoothly between industrial grime and aristocratic social worlds.[103] Of course, a good deal of effort was required to maintain her reputation, and the autobiography may have been a part of this. Kowaleski-Wallace has warned of court records containing 'narratives of self-creation'.[104] It should be noted that Sarah Florry's autobiography was not

[100] Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 283-5.

[101] Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit',153-54.

[102] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 312.

[103] Ibid., especially chapter 6.

[104] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects,* 116.

for the benefit of others but was a prop for her in her lowest and loneliest moments, wistfully revealed in its pages. Such introspection provides deeper insights into her self-fashioning, which Judith Spicksley argues allows 'the individual to emerge as a proactive agent in his or her social make-up'.[105]

Consolidating Social and Business Identity

Dianne Lawrence has analysed the use of performance by British colonial women of the second half of the nineteenth century, describing this as a means of introducing gentility into new, hostile environments through material culture.[106] Although in a different temporal and physical landscape, there is no doubt that Florry also struggled with her gentility in a hostile climate, but her worlds, industrial and social, were juxtaposed, rather than thousands of miles apart. Nevertheless, Florry was sociable and presented herself persuasively, aided by her use of material culture. Her will shows luxury items including a silver coffee pot, signifying her polite lifestyle; she owned a carriage and visited London and exclusive spa towns. There were visits to the theatre and holidays with Lady Holte, wife of Baronet Sir Charles Holte, and Florry had visitors and gave dinner parties, perhaps to maintain business networks with other factors like the Sparrows.[107] The

[105] Judith Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations: Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the "Spinster" in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Identity and Agency*, 107.

[106] Dianne Lawrence, *Genteel Women: Empire and Domestic Material Culture* (Manchester: MUP, 2012*),* 3-4.

[107] Florry, 'Autobiography', 12, 48-9, 168-71.

furniture sale which followed her death included many substantial mahogany and hand-painted items, as well as 'one hundred ounces of excellent plate'.[108]

All this indicates that her social capital was high; entertaining cost money and required servants. As Ponsonby has shown, it would have been far more usual for single middle-class women of the period to give inexpensive tea-parties.[109] In business, Florry created an identity as a reputable and trustworthy entrepreneur; her business and social profiles were not only credible, they were high status and she skilfully maintained these two worlds without allowing them to come into collision. Occasionally the mask slipped, as when she wrote in some distress, 'but the difficulties are at some times inconceivable and had I not conquered still greater ones - I should think them insurmountable'.[110] The immediacy of entries such as this render the autobiography as more of a diary on occasions, their confessional appearance suggesting that they served to relieve the stress she was under.

Sarah Florry's ability to hold the contradictions of her life in balance, through industrial, commercial and social networks, accords with Vickery's pragmatic view about the permeability of social and cultural barriers in eighteenth-century society.[111] In a public show of financial and cultural solidarity, in 1798 Florry accompanied Lady Holte's married daughter, Mrs Bracebridge, and her husband to the bank of Taylor and Lloyd where Florry banked, probably to provide an

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[108] Advertisement, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* 9 July 1832:2.

[109] Florry, 'Autobiography', 7, 10-11, 129; Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, 147.

[110] Florry, 'Autobiography', 30.

[111] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 29.

introduction.[112] That a woman in trade was able to make an introduction for an aristocratic family speaks eloquently of Florry's commercial influence. She had the right credentials for obtaining financial credit: honesty, industriousness and a reputation as an informal notary.[113] Bracebridge, on the other hand, though a gentleman, was acquiring a reputation for financial recklessness. Despite his connections his reputation in the banking world may have dented his social capital.[114] It is possible that he was attempting to manipulate Florry's credit with the bank to his advantage, but her reputation with them remained secure, as a later loan shows. She succeeded by selectively integrating her social and business life to maintain her credibility in the market place. The permeability of the social and business structures in late eighteenth-century Birmingham must have encouraged able women like Florry to employ social capital and business networks to build and maintain their reputations. Why, then, are there not more examples of involvement in business among the women in this study?

The erection of gender barriers in eighteenth-century business was, according to Kowaleski-Wallace, assisted by the literati of London and ideologically motivated editors of trade manuals like Campbell in *The London Tradesman*. She argues that their objective was the formation of a homosocial business network purged of

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[112] Florry, 'Autobiography', 40.

[113] Florry, 'Autobiography': 'I went in a coach by poor A. Brown's desire to make her will', 6 January 1799, 46.

[114] Oliver Fairclough*, The Grand Old Mansion: The Holtes and their Successors at Aston Hall 1618-1864* (Birmingham: BMAG, 1984), 51.

the taint of the feminine and, in the process, of women themselves.[115] But this London view would have been slow to reach provincial industrial communities, more interested in making themselves rich, so other influences should be considered. The recession following the Napoleonic Wars after 1815 had a domino effect on trade, and Berg and Behagg have suggested that in Birmingham, for example, falling trade led to fierce competition and cost-cutting. This resulted in only small and large production units remaining viable: one with few overheads, the other with capital resources. Both date this trend in Birmingham manufacturing to between 1829 and 1840, with credit to medium firms curtailed by larger firms, preventing expansion.[116] This thesis, in dealing with the middle classes, does not consider petty trades in which, as Phillips and Earle have shown, women with little capital could trade.[117] Medium-sized businesses like Florry's faced major challenges: for example, well-funded joint-stock companies, which appeared following the re-introduction of limited liability in 1855-6, squeezed out under-capitalised competitors who traditionally accessed the credit matrix; management of accounts became professionalised, and lines of credit dried up as investors moved into more secure government stock.[118] Together, these amounted to

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[115] R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London: Gardner, 1747), for derogatory comments on women in work, see for example: 208-9, 227-8; Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 119-22.

[116] Berg, 'Small Producer Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century England', *Business History* 35, no. 1 (1993): 36; Behagg, *Politics and Production*, 21.

[117] *Phillips, Women in Business*, 211-12; Earle, 'The Female Labour Market', 338.

[118] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 238-9.

powerful deterrents to those women, and men, who wished to enter the risky world of business, and may have been factors, alongside gendered separation, for the reduction in the female presence in business. However, it should be noted that Earle suggests that 'the 1851 census seriously undernumerated the employment of wives' which he attributes to information being provided by men; the same may have applied to married independent women traders.[119]

Florry took advantage of an earlier, pioneering business climate. As Hopkins observes, 'the times [the second half of the eighteenth century] favoured the businessman who was willing to seize opportunities for expansion'.[120] As a woman, Florry did just that; perhaps driven by the failure of her father's business she created a role as a businesswoman and an identity as a successful entrepreneur. In 1797 Florry reviewed her life, saying:

> Most of the time has been spent in the anxious pursuit of business. A very small portion indeed in any other enjoyment or pursuit. With every reason to hope I look forward to gaining a Competency that may enable me to devote the latter period of my days to better purposes and to the enjoyment of tranquillity![121]

Florry eventually achieved her competency and enjoyed a sociable retirement, before dying a wealthy woman in 1832, leaving £4,000 to various female

[119] Earle, 'The Female Labour Market', 337.

[120] Hopkins, *Birmingham*, 39.

[121] Florry, 'Autobiography', 30 (her emphases).

friends.[122] Her ability to employ social capital and move with ease between industry and high-society reflects her ingenuity; by recognising and engaging with opportunities available to entrepreneurs in Birmingham in this period Florry created an identity as a successful woman of business and a gentlewoman of high social status.

Charlotte Matthews (née Marlar) (1759-1802)

Charlotte Matthews inherited her husband's London banking business following his death in 1792, including the account of Boulton and Watt, leading Midland manufacturers of steam engines, metal toys and coinage.[123] Although London-based, her inclusion in this study reflects her unique links with Midland manufacturing. Already in possession of considerable social capital as the widow of a merchant banker, which also conferred membership of Lloyds of London on her, Matthews used both enthusiastically to raise credit for her clients, opening a Bank of England account to meet Boulton's considerable borrowing requirements.[124] Accepting this account came with considerable risk, as Boulton had a reputation for running with extended credit. Hopkins suggests that as early

[122] Will of Sarah Florry dated 7 May 1821, proved 26 June 1832, Canterbury PRO, Prob11/11801/142, TNA.

[123] Fiona Tate, 'How Do We Know What We Know? The Archives of Soho', in *Matthew Boulton,* (London: YUP, 2009), 110.

[124] Wiskin, Christine. 2013 "Matthews [née Marlar], Charlotte (bap. 1759, d. 1802), businesswoman." *ODNB,* accessed 24 Aug. 2018. http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-70352; Wiskin, 'Women Finance and Credit', 158-9.

as the 1770s Boulton's company borrowings were at least £60,000, often secured only by bills of exchange, but for Matthews the account was desirable because the fame of Boulton and Watt enhanced her business.[125] From her London base Matthews specialised in banking, insurance and bill discounting. In the absence of a fully-functional national currency, bills were often used by business to complete transactions between debtors, creditors and the banks, a system which carried risks, but from which able bankers like Matthews could make a profit.[126] Having inherited a country estate from her husband, Matthews used it shrewdly as collateral against the large loans she obtained for Boulton and his partners. These could involve year-end indebtedness of anything up to £35,000 of mainly unsecured loans, based only on mutual trust.[127] In addition, Matthews accepted bills, ran accounts and received payments on Boulton and Watt's behalf.[128]

Networking

Underpinning this complex undertaking were her connections in the City of London; these gave Boulton access to extensive networks of financiers and politicians. Matthews additionally acted as Boulton's agent with government officials and with the East India Company, obtaining lucrative contracts as well as acting as his distribution agent for minted coins.[129] Social capital was an essential part of life in the City, and Matthews was assiduous in maintaining hers: she was a

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[125] Hopkins, *Birmingham*, 87-8.

[126] Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 248.

[127] Wiskin, 'Matthews, Charlotte', *ODNB*; Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 81.

[128] Tate, 'How Do We Know What We Know?' 110.

[129] Wiskin, 'Matthews, Charlotte', *ODNB*.

frequent dinner guest of men of probity such as the Bishop of Bangor, and a friend of aristocrats like Lady Eyre.[130] Intelligence was an essential part of her business. She dealt in market information, the government position on trade, sometimes hostile to commerce, and the credit status of potential clients, sharing this information with Boulton. Reporting to him on American Andrew Buchanan, a potential client, she advised that Buchanan was reputed to be honest but to have little property; she therefore advised Boulton 'not to embark too deeply, but what strikes me is that Mr B. ought to pay (at least in part), his first order before he shou'd expect the execution of another or he shou'd be guaranteed by some person of responsibility here'. Boulton heeded her advice. To gain this information Matthews had enquired through four parties.[131] Such extensive networking illustrates how vital shared intelligence was in protecting City bankers against risk. For Matthews, her acceptance as a member of this usually all-male network was proof of her social capital.

Interestingly, Matthews seems to have experienced little direct gender bias from colleagues; as Wiskin has observed, more important were ability and creditworthiness, both of which she took great trouble to emphasise.[132] Nevertheless, presumably aware of what Kowaleski-Wallace calls the homosocial world of London finance, Matthews carefully observed the established gender

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[130] Charlotte Matthews to Matthew Boulton, 3 December 1794, MS 3782/12/68/102; Charlotte Matthews to Matthew Boulton, March 1795, MS 3782/12/68/115, BAH.

[131]Charlotte Matthews to Matthew Boulton, 13 December 1794, MS 3782/12/68/104, BAH.

[132] Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 150-51.

conventions of the City, sending male clerks as her agents to the masculine enclaves of Lloyds and the coffee houses, where they performed her business, garnered intelligence and 'Change Alley' gossip.[133] Although vivacious and sociable in personality, Matthews shrewdly adopted a stance of modest gentility in the City, which was in effect a collective male institution. Richard Jenkins encapsulates the potential male anxiety created by her incursion into such a space, defining an institution essentially as 'a pattern of behaviour... that has become established over time as "the way things are done"'.[134] Matthews intuitively countered any disorientating effect of her presence by employing material culture, seen in her adoption of permanent mourning wear, to emphasise her carefully crafted profile of modest widowhood. This reminded the members of her right, as a widow of a Lloyd's member, to practice her husband's profession; it may even have been a skilful cultural reference, for the benefit of her classically-educated colleagues, to Penelope, wife of Ulysses, the icon of the virtuously faithful wife. This behaviour comes into ironic relief against the knowledge of the Matthews' stormy marriage in which Boulton and Watt, also their close friends, were often the peace-makers.[135] In widowhood, Matthew's letters to Boulton conveyed an intimate tone; she expressed mock indignation about his flamboyant decision to order a pink silk waistcoat, writing: 'Now as I wear only black, I can not permit you to wear pink', and enclosing an alternative material she added, 'at your

[133] Ibid., 189; Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 112-3.

[134] Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 157.

[135] James Watt to Annie Watt, 22 January 1792, MS 3219/4/269/4, BAH.

age a similarity rather than a diversity of colors ought to be preferred'.[136] Arguably Matthews was here diplomatically urging him to follow her example in using outward appearance to raise his social capital with influential financial backers and aristocrats. This was especially important during Boulton and Watt's prolonged 1796 legal campaign against copyright breaches, which required active parliamentary support.[137]

Business, Society and Politics

The amounts of financial credit commanded by Matthews for Boulton can be seen in her letters to him of 17 and 23 December 1794 confirming that 'governance' or running costs would be met by a draft of £3,000 by 31 December, and a further £1,000 by mid-January. She also provided a loan for the purchase of land, writing:

> Inclosed [sic] are the half of bank notes to the value of £6100:0s 0d.. and the remaining three thousand one hundred pounds please to pass to my credit and acknowledge receipt by return of post [,] the other halves are sent this day by another conveyance.[138]

The notes had been cut in half and sent separately against possible theft, emphasising the risks of eighteenth-century banking. These loans, exceeding £10,000, had been brokered in under a month by Matthews, confirming her high status in the City.

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[136] Charlotte Matthews to Matthew Boulton, 25 July 1794, MS 3782/12/67/79, BAH.

[137] Dickinson, *James Watt*, 174-8.

[138] Charlotte Matthews to Matthew Boulton, 17 December 1794, MS 3782/12/68/106, and ibid., 23 December 1794, MS 3782/12/68/109, BAH.

Boulton and Matthews thrived on intrigue. With the patent case against Cornish mine-owners, who had copied Watts designs, due before Lord Chief Justice Eyre, she advised Boulton that she was dining at the Bishop of Bangor's and the Lord Chief Justice would probably be there. 'Wou'd you have me say anything about the Cornish sco—ls [scoundrels], or feel his pulse in any way?'[139] In March, while making a social call on Lady Eyre, the wife of the Lord Chief Justice, she heard gossip that 'B&W will gain their cause', and immediately called unannounced on the Lord Chief Justice in his chambers to discuss the case.[140] Barclay and Richardson have identified such irrepressible performances as politically empowering for women, who they see as reacting to constraints, political and social, encountered in their world.[141]

In using contacts so boldly to further her clients' cause Matthews demonstrated a complete confidence in her ability and in the credibility of her social and business identity. That said, letters show that although Matthews relished her activities on the financial stage her position could be precarious. In March 1795 she told Boulton about a large Dutch merchant bank in financial difficulty, revealing her fear that the shock waves could damage the City of London and their mutual

[139] Ibid., 3 December 1794, MS 3782/12/68/102, BAH.

[140] Ibid., 6 March 1795, MS 3782/12/68/115, BAH.

[141] Katie Barclay and Sarah Richardson, '"Introduction", Performing the Self: Women's Lives in Historical Perspective', *Women's History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 179.

interests.[142] The letters reveal the intense pressure she faced in running a banking house as a lone woman, probably too careful of her own reputation to confide in City colleagues. Instead, as the letters show, she and Boulton confided in one another, both recognising that survival in business depended on a show of outward confidence. Matthews did survive these alarms and remained successful. She bequeathed property and £5,000 in her will, mainly to her family.[143]

Expansion of the eighteenth-century financial system made Matthews' career possible; relishing the challenge of competing in a male environment, she fashioned an identity as a high-flying international banker.[144] By combining her financial and social roles, and using her extensive social capital, she obtained impressive levels of credit for her favourite clients, becoming a powerful driver in sustaining the successful businesses of Boulton and Watt. Throughout their careers Florry and Matthews employed material culture as props to reinforce their identities as business women in male dominated sectors of the economy: Matthews through her clothes and properties, and Florry through keeping a carriage, entertaining in her stylish Edgbaston home and visits to fashionable resorts. Through overlapping professional and social roles and making perceptive use of social and business networks to accumulate social capital, these women maintained credibility in the market place, creating identities as successful women

[142] Charlotte Matthews to Matthew Boulton, 31 March 1795, MS 3782/12/68/124, BAH.

[143] Will of Charlotte Matthews dated 26 November 1801, proved 16 January 1802, Canterbury PRO, Prob11/1368/176, TNA.

[144] Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations', 107.

of business. They are both impressive examples of the women described by Phillips as 'deeply embedded within highly complex networks of credit … and active participants in mixed-gender business networks'.[145] Florry and Matthews moved in different circles, yet their methods and successes were similar, suggesting that in the economic environment of the late eighteenth century such opportunities may have been open to other women too.

A survey of the period 1742 to 1906 by Margaret Dawes and Nesta Selwyn identified seventy-one women banking partners in fifty-eight country banks, including three generations of female relatives of Abiah Darby of Coalbrookdale, who is a subject of chapter 2. The fact that sixty-three of them were still active in the nineteenth century suggests that, although gender ideology should not be underestimated, there were still opportunities for women to navigate social and cultural pressures, and some opportunities remained significant.[146] The following section examines the role of married women in family businesses and assesses whether their roles were limited by domestic duties or marital status.

Women and the Family Business

Historians have noted that between the 1790s and the1830s the separation of work and home among the middle class became more marked, but many exceptions remained, mostly at the lower end of the middle-class scale. In 1794 Richard and Elizabeth Cadbury opened a draper's shop in Birmingham; living over

[145] Phillips, *Women in Business*, 91; Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit', 147-91

[146] Margaret Dawes and Nesta Selwyn, *Women Who Made Money: Women Partners in British Private Banks 1752-1906* (USA: Trafford, 2010), xi-xii, 167-9.

the shop enabled Elizabeth to run the home, care for and educate their children and apprentices, besides managing the shop in her husband's absence. The next Cadbury generation, Benjamin and Candia, did the same, not moving to a separate house until the 1840s.[147] A preliminary investigation of London criminal court, livery companies and apprenticeship records by Amy Erickson suggests that 'the great majority of wives in eighteenth-century London continued to work in the labour force after marriage'.[148] Yet Elizabeth Raffald, who produced the 1773 Manchester Directory, recorded her own grocer's shop under the name of her husband, perhaps because, as Hunt suggests, most women's work advertised was menial; Raffald may therefore have been protecting her reputation as author of the Directory.[149] The situation remained fluid across the middle-class spectrum, but as John Tosh argues: 'The dominant tendency is unmistakable. From being a site of productive work, the household was increasingly becoming a refuge from it'.[150] The two women featured here found a compromise, so it could be supposed that others did so too.

[147] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 52-57.

[148] Amy Erickson, 'Married Women's Occupations in Eighteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change* 23, no. 2 (2008), 269.

[149] Hunt, *The Middling Sort,* 129-32.

[150] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: YUP, 2007, first published 1999), 14.

Elizabeth Shaw (1788-1869), Annie Watt (1744-1832)

In 1815 businessman John Shaw wrote to his wife Elizabeth, confirming her role in their business: 'It is your province to see and direct others to work'. [151] Even though Elizabeth Shaw lacked any tangible proof of her position, her husband placed her authority over that of everyone else in the business in his absence. But how significant could such a role be given women's domestic responsibilities? Did they negotiate the gender practices of the day to fulfil the needs of the business, and what were the consequences? The lives of two women are examined to answer these questions: Anne McGrigor of Glasgow, known as Annie, married Boulton's partner engineer James Watt in 1776, and Elizabeth Wilkinson of Colne, Lancashire, married hardware factor John Shaw of Wolverhampton in 1813. These two women, from lower middle-class families, had helped in their parents' businesses before marriage and did the same for their husbands. The Boulton and Watt business was a large enterprise, exporting steam engines widely in Europe and Russia, whereas the Shaw enterprise was an emerging hardware factoring business, though it later expanded into India.[152]

Epistolary Foundations

With long periods of separation, these couples attempted to sustain their relationships through their voluminous correspondence, which demonstrates the intertwining of business and domestic issues and offers rich details of social and political life. Additionally, it reveals extensive blurring of the cultural gender conventions of the day, for the men as well as the women. Tosh has observed that 'middle-class family life was far more varied than the popular stereotype allows',

[151] Quoted in Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families*, 89.

[152] Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families*, 64.

and this variation is particularly visible where women constructed identities for themselves that included involvement in the family business.[153] Watt's letters to his wife are a jumbled mixture of requests for engine parts and measurements and expenditure on curtains and carpets, highlighting the indivisibility of business and domestic priorities in the period. Tasked by Annie Watt with buying household goods when on London business trips, Watt wrote in 1787: 'I have bought … 2 pieces 56 yds Striped and flowered chintz for bed & window curtains 4 & 6 Yards wide. The retail price is 4/9d'.[154] For their part, the Shaws, separated by the distance of over a hundred miles between her home in Colne, Lancashire and his in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, employed their letters to negotiate their gendered expectations during courtship, establishing common ground for their personal and professional relationships. Before marriage, Elizabeth Wilkinson skilfully acquainted Shaw with the identity she was constructing as his wife-to-be, establishing the parameters of her future independence. She warned him: 'A command will not go half so far with a woman as an intreaty [sic]'.[155]

Both women had worked in industrial businesses and continued to do so following marriage: Annie Watt assisted her father in his dyeing and cloth business; Elizabeth Wilkinson worked in her family's hardware shops, where John Shaw called to obtain orders. Shaw, who found his work difficult, soon recognised her knowledge of his trade and her capacity to understand his problems. He wrote to

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[153] Tosh, *A Man's Place,*195.

[154] James Watt to Annie Watt, 10 March 1787, MS 3219/4/267A/6, BAH.

[155] Elizabeth Wilkinson to John Shaw, 25 November 1812, MS DX 206/28, Wolverhampton Archive and Library Services (hereafter WALS).

her: ‘What a relief it is to the mind to have a sincere and faithful friend to whom we can at all times communicate our thoughts … one who will share in all our joys and be a source of comfort to us in all our trials’.[156] By 1812 Shaw was furnishing the marital home in Wolverhampton, but although his name would have appeared in tradesmen’s accounts, written instructions from Elizabeth Wilkinson, still in Colne, show that many decisions were hers. Having told Shaw that she did not approve of paintings and mirrors: ‘a mirror-is a story-teller’, she added, ‘as you say, I hope you will not feel the loss of fine paintings nor want company while I am with you’.[157] As Deborah Cohen has suggested, advice on household furniture may have been aimed at men, but Wilkinson’s detailed inventories of her requirements show the importance of women’s often ‘hidden’ involvement in decision-making.[158]

Wilkinson also went on buying trips to Manchester with her mother. She wrote to tell Shaw that she was ‘Quite tired before night in walking from one warehouse to another’.[159] As Clive Edwards has shown, in the early nineteenth century provincial warehouses were often synonymous with retail display, so this may have been a shopping trip for wedding clothes.[160] However, as Elizabeth’s mother

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[156] John Shaw to Elizabeth Wilkinson, 12 November 1812, MS 9, Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections, University of Birmingham (hereafter CRL).

[157] Elizabeth Wilkinson to John Shaw, 25 July 1812, MS DX/206/22, WALS.

[158] Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (London: YUP, 2006), 92-3.

[159] Elizabeth Wilkinson to John Shaw, 25 July 1812, MS DX/206/22, WALS.

[160] Clive Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 47.

ran the family business during her husband's periodic bouts of mental illness, it is possible that the two women also visited warehouses to order business stock.[161] Popp has shown that this was not without precedent among female entrepreneurs in the period, 'no doubt necessitating some hard bargaining with Manchester wholesalers'.[162]

The withdrawal of women from the world of work was often regarded as a tangible expression of a family's rise in status, and literature suggests that this was especially true of the middle class. Davidoff and Hall, while acknowledging the existence of opportunities for women to work, suggest that where social norms were ignored, there could be consequences for a family's creditworthiness. They also claim that, 'the equation of women with domesticity came to be one of the fixed points of middle-class status'. However, they concede that the attacks on female sexual independence, often found in didactic literature, may actually have arisen through fears of women's expanding opportunities for economic activity.[163] Both Annie Watt and Elizabeth Shaw came from areas specialising in heavy-industry, where many lower-middle class families in business saw it as their first

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[161] Elizabeth Wilkinson Snr. to Elizabeth Shaw (née Wilkinson), 24 January 1822, MS 85, CRL.

[162] Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families*, 87.

[163] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 275. See also: Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?'; Kathryn Gleadle, 'Revisiting Family Fortunes: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Publication of L. Davidoff & C. Hall (1987) *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson)', *Women's History Review* 16, no. 5 (2007).

duty to train their children, daughters and sons, either in their business or another to ensure the family's economic survival. They made use of networks, not only business but also religious, financial and familial to procure apprenticeships for their offspring, as the Reynolds and the Darbys did (see Chapter 2).[164] Many families aimed to keep the business solvent and growing to be able to capitalise the next generation in trade; this became a problem for Elizabeth's father who, short of money, used part of her dowry to capitalise one of her brothers who was opening a shop.[165] Girls were likely to be trained in the family business, helping with ordering, customers and accounts, not only saving the family a wage, but providing daughters with a trade, a common practice also observed in northern towns by Barker.[166] The home, often on or close to the business premises, as Elizabeth Shaw had insisted her marital home should be, became a hub of commerce with orders, money and customers flowing through the doors. Shaw and Watt were clearly equipped to play a management role in the absence of their husbands, and although theirs was still a subsidiary role, such women were, as Kay argues, economically active.[167] Correspondence also shows that they had a voice in the running of the family enterprises even when the men were in residence. Elizabeth Shaw calculated that four of the first ten years of marriage had seen her and John parted in the cause of the business.[168] Both therefore

[164] Barker, *Family and Business*, 121.

[165] Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families*, 97-101.

[166] Barker, *The Business of Women*, 1-2.

[167] Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship, 5.*

[168] Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw, 11 January 1823, MS 58, CRL.

invested heavily in letter-writing, successfully developing their partnership through the medium of the written word. The Watts corresponded at least weekly, sometimes daily, also using letters as vehicles for their relationship: to express their feelings candidly, sometimes perhaps too candidly in the case of Annie Watt, and to explore hopes and fears about themselves and their business. Letters were ideal neutral territory in which to encourage, criticise and reconcile.

Establishing Authority in Business

The women immersed themselves in commerce: both acted as intermediaries, meeting with and writing to important clients. Elizabeth Shaw advised her husband: 'As to the letters, Crane almost always brings them to me'. This reflected not only Shaw's fears of espionage, then a serious problem for business, but also shows that Henry Crane, the manager and later Shaw's partner, had respect for Elizabeth's role.[169]

Equally, Annie's letters to Watt show the managers constantly deferring to her for advice, as when a customer asked for an enlargement of one engine and ordered another: 'We know not whether to wait on advice from you as he is in a great hurry', she wrote.[170] Her organising ability and thorough grasp of business are evident when she wrote: 'Mr Southern [Watt's assistant] bids me tell you that the order for Wheal Virgin cylinder and condenser pumps is sent to Bersham and the drawing of the engines to Cornwall'. The same letter contains a detailed list of work completed at Soho. She concludes: 'I now think my dear James you know as

[169] Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw, 31 March 1815, MS 43a, CRL.

[170] Annie Watt to James Watt, 18 November 1786, MS 3219/4/5/51, BAH.

much of your business as you would have done were you at home'.[171] Hopkins and Dickinson both recognise the poor organisation of the Soho Manufactory of Boulton and Watt, partly due to the partners' frequent and lengthy absences. Annie Watt's role, as far as the engine business was concerned, was invaluable for the health of the company. Boulton's previous partner, Fothergill, accused Boulton of 'bad management at Soho', and an audit uncovered losses of £10,000. Hopkins suggests that only Boulton's success with Watt's engines obliterated his earlier failings, further highlighting the stabilising influence of Annie Watt's presence in the absence of the partners.[172] Without her input it is questionable whether the business could have succeeded, or even survived.

Banks and clients also recognised the women's authority, and the fact that James Watt and John Shaw chose their wives over partners and employees for this managerial responsibility suggests that they recognised the women would best protect their interests. This is confirmed by the way Elizabeth Shaw and Annie Watt maintained involvement, at least in some form, as they coped with pregnancy and child-rearing, even though managers were in situ. Although often ill or tired, neither seems to have considered their marital status a bar to business involvement. As Kay has shown of other entrepreneurial women, both women negotiated the gender conventions of the day, usually by upholding proprieties relating to modesty and femininity. Elizabeth Shaw, for instance, was

[171] Ibid., 25 December 1786, MS 3219/4/5/56, BAH.

[172] Hopkins, *Birmingham*, 86-7; Dickinson, *Matthew Boulton*, 109-12.

accompanied by a servant when in public.[173] In this way, they were able to employ their female agency to enhance the reputation of the family enterprises, and to create respected business identities for themselves. Annie Watt and Elizabeth Shaw were central to key business operations including finance, operational standards and connectivity with clients, partners and business associates. Despite their sometimes tempestuous relationship, Watt clearly recognised his wife's ability. He suggested that she help her father set up a new procedure for producing bleach and provided her with technical instructions, an indication that he recognized her working knowledge of chemistry.[174] He trusted her to get things done, as when she writes: 'I have told Mr Southern about the Albion Mill beam, he sends his compliments'.[175]

Elizabeth Shaw also kept an eye on the staff and the warehouse, although she approved of Shaw's manager and later partner, informing her husband, 'I think it was well that Crane came into the warehouse'.[176] Neither woman was marginalised.[177] Apart from Watt only his wife had access to the confidential Boulton and Watt letter book, enhancing Annie's authority in the eyes of the

[173] Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw, 11 March 1816, MS 47, CRL.; Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship,* 134.

[174] Annie Watt to James Watt, 5 October 1787, MS 3219/4/5/70, BAH; Uglow, *The Lunar Men*, 313.

[175] Annie Watt to James Watt, 7 March 1787, MS 3219/4/5/59, BAH.

[176] Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw, 21 March 1815, MS 42, CRL.

[177] Ibid., 11 April 1815, MS 44a, CRL.

employees.[178] As Barker has shown in her survey of businesswomen in northern towns between 1760 and 1830, those women willing to assert themselves often did so for the benefit of their families, and this worked effectively for the Shaw and Watt families, leaving the men free to expand their businesses.[179] The division of work and home was never absolute, for the men as well as the women. Watt had his drawing office and laboratory at home, probably for fear of industrial espionage, as his inventions were the target of such attacks.[180] Annie Watt was a discreet and trustworthy partner, offering constant encouragement to the naturally depressive Watt, and she often enlivened her letters with scornful descriptions of his enemies and wishes for their eventual fate. The Cornish customers were a bane to Watt, led by his rival Trevithick, but she was undismayed: 'Your engines will soon soar far above the reach of his petty malice', she predicted comfortingly.[181]

Elizabeth also supported Shaw at times of crisis. Shaw was away in 1816 when there was a run on Horderns, the bank they dealt with. She wrote offering calm reassurance: 'I hope that confidence will be restored by tomorrow', but prudently suggested he take fewer orders in the meantime.[182] This shows her grasp of the need to control cash flow to maintain the company's creditworthiness. With Shaw's

[178] James Watt to Annie Watt, 14 January 1792, MS 3219/4/269/1, BAH.

[179] Barker, *The Business of Women*, 134-5.

[180] Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw, 31 March 1815, MS 43a, CRL; James Watt to Annie Watt, 14 January 1792, MS 3219/4/269/1, BAH.

[181] Annie Watt to James Watt, 17 December 1779, MS 3219/4/4/9, BAH.

[182] Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw, 1 April 1816, MS 49a, CRL.

long trips away, as letters show, she dealt with the banking in his absence and probably handled the business finances more than he did. Business intelligence on rivals' fortunes, poor credit risks and potential new recruits were all assessed by her and passed to Shaw.[183] Another vital aspect of maintaining customer loyalty was sociability, the cultural currency of business. In the absence of their men the two women were assiduous in maintaining such links, showing that they were not just clandestine helpers in the business but were publicly recognised as people of status within the family firm. In 1822 Elizabeth Shaw, writing from her parents' home in Colne, advised Shaw, 'I have called upon your customers here'.[184] Annie Watt, on trips to her parents, visited clients around Glasgow, as when Watt wrote to her in 1780 with an urgent request, 'I wish you to visit Herbertshires … please make my compliments to that family'.[185] Sociability conferred status on the customer within their own business community; for Watt and Shaw, such social networking created customer loyalty and could lead to early payment.

The scrupulous oversight of the women enabled Watt and Shaw to concentrate on expanding their enterprises in the field, often for months on end. The work of these women was harnessed in the cause of the family business and the family security. As Kay has argued, work of this kind should be seen as business, and not as an extension of domestic duties: 'Anything less would be to ignore the economic evidence and diminish the achievements of female proprietors'.[186] Despite the

[183] Ibid., 13 March 1815, MS 41, CRL.

[184] Ibid., 25 May 1822, MS 54, CRL.

[185] James Watt to Annie Watt, 16 January 1780, MS 3219/4/267/3, BAH.

[186] Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*, 5.

absence of their names on deeds of partnership Elizabeth Shaw and Annie Watt were more than just economically active. They made decisions, dealt with staff and logistics daily, not as dutiful wives, but as partners with a serious interest in the success of the business. They had a clear sense of their identity as business women and should be regarded as such. They managed multiple roles, just as the men did. The correspondence shows the complexity of women's business and domestic lives and demonstrates that such sources say more about the real preoccupations of women's lives, as Vickery has argued, than prescriptive literature ever could.[187] It is also worth noting the extent to which the men, as well as the women, dealt with domestic details at an almost micro-level. By 1821 John Shaw had developed a dual role as business and family man, as he happily took over child-minding during his wife's prolonged visits to assist in her family's businesses in Colne. He not only reported on the children's development, including their teething and progress in walking, but also on his games with them: 'In general we get a good batch of play [in the park] ere we get out again'.[188]

Amanda Vickery is adamant that many such relationships existed and endorses Keith Wrightson's suggestion that conventions may have been outwardly observed, but privately the partnership was often an equal one.[189] The evidence suggests that the mutual trust and loyalty of the Watts and Shaws, which the

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[187] For use of prescriptive literature see: Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes;* Cohen, *Household Gods*; Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?'

[188] John Shaw to Elizabeth Shaw, 10 May 1821, MS 17, CRB.

[189] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 60; Keith Wrightson, *English Society* (London: Routledge, 2002, first published Hutchinson 1982), 92.

correspondence had helped to create, was valued by all of them, and is further exemplified in Elizabeth Shaw's continued assistance to the businesses of her birth family in Colne. Both Watt and Shaw considered their own presence in the field essential to protect their interests against competitors, but without the distinctive contribution of their wives in coordinating business through the domestic hub they may well have lost personal influence over some company decisions, inevitably weakening their position as partners.

The generational changes between Elizabeth Shaw's life-experiences and those of her daughters are strongly marked by the leisure enjoyed by the younger women, as neither entered the business in any capacity. By the time they were adults their parents were wealthy, and both received trusts of £10,000 in Shaw's will, the interest paid free from coverture.[190] The Watts' daughter Janet died early of tuberculosis. Had she survived, it is probable that she too would have lived a life of leisure, for in addition to Heathfields, their Handsworth home, the Watts bought a country estate in Wales in 1798. The exit of daughters of successful entrepreneurial families from the business may well often have been due to wealth rather than gender.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the world of business was open to at least some women to a considerable extent, but after the 1830s significant changes to the way businesses were financed and structured meant that women and men without

[190] Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families*, 116.

access to adequate capital faced growing barriers to entering business in all but the petty trades, or where businesses were inherited. This, added to the financial inequalities women already experienced and the pressure emanating from gendered social practices, may have led to a reduction in women's business activities other than by the traditional method of investment. However, Earle's concerns about the under-recording of women's employment in the 1851 census suggests that similar omissions might also apply to women working in family businesses, especially as this thesis has shown that research material has often only been accessed through the records of the men. Prior to those changes, however, the chapter has demonstrated how women's agency could be a powerful driver in promoting and sustaining successful businesses.

Women prioritised their various roles to ensure that they became instrumental in the expansion and success of family enterprises. The examples included women from different levels of the middle classes and their motives and experiences varied. Where business interests competed with social and cultural expectations various mediating tactics were employed. For example, women might be attended by a servant, or avoid trespassing on masculine preserves such as the coffee houses. The outcomes were generally positive; Sarah Florry, for example, moved easily between industry and high society.

The analysis has shown women's ability to initiate, acquire roles in, and contribute positively to, family businesses. The Wedgwood and Boulton examples show that not all women were desirous of entering business, but that did not preclude the younger Wedgwood women, for instance, from contributing constructive financial solutions to assist the business. This chapter has highlighted the benefits of a micro-history approach as a means of obtaining more nuanced results from

women’s recorded experiences. Especially illuminating has been the evidence of women’s authority within business, seen in the many initiatives they took to enhance the sustainability of their family enterprise. They were not ‘hidden-behind-the-scenes’ contributors; their role was openly acknowledged in their time, though apart from single, independent women not usually formally recorded. This is no better demonstrated than in the businesses of Boulton and Watt, where, although the men are still credited with leading British manufacturing into the modern world, the companies were in fact financed and held together at the epicentre by women.

Chapter 2: Religion

Introduction

Chapter 1 established that women's agency could be a powerful driver in promoting and sustaining successful businesses, especially family enterprises. The focus of Chapter 2 is on women's active engagement with protestant evangelicalism from the 1750s to the 1860s and beyond. To some extent, of course, all women in this study were 'actively engaged' with religion in some way. Sarah Florry, for example, attended the prestigious St Phillip's Church, the future Anglican Cathedral of Birmingham, whereas the Quaker Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck joined first the Methodists and then the Moravians. Davidoff and Hall argue that many women employed religion as 'a vital individual space, a place for self-fulfilment'.[1]

This chapter extends Davidoff and Hall's argument by examining whether it was possible for women to develop religious identities as women preachers.[2] Abiah -

[1] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1987); 136. See also: Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP), 1991).

[2] The terms 'preacher' and 'minister' are synonymous, defined partly by Anderson's definition as: 'the deliberate undertaking by women of evangelization, spiritual instruction or exhortation in mixed public assemblies held for that purpose'. Unlike

Darby (1716-1794), wife of a wealthy Quaker iron master, Abraham Darby of Shropshire, became a travelling Quaker preacher from 1751; Elizabeth Smith (1805-1836) was a single, lower middle-class dressmaker from Ludlow. She joined the Primitive Methodists and gave up her business to become an itinerant preacher in 1826. Catherine Marsh (1818-1912), daughter of an upper middle-class Anglican priest, began her discreet ministry in 1853 after converting a dying man to Christianity. Having established in chapter 1 that women could negotiate identities, if not always as independent businesswomen, then certainly as active participants in family businesses, this chapter will compare the efforts of these women in three different denominations, questioning the extent to which each denomination provided fertile ground and a positive reception for women's activities. It also assesses the role of networks in creating supportive communities within which the women could operate. The chapter on business suggested that the successful businesswomen of the late eighteenth century were not followed by a new generation, often because increased financial independence removed the incentive, as with the Wedgwoods and the Shaws. This chapter will consider whether the same picture emerges as far as preachers were concerned, or whether the religious activities of women preachers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left any kind of legacy for future generations. Each section begins with an outline of the Protestant denomination involved, but first, as all

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Anderson, I include those middle-class women who worked among the poor: Olive Anderson, 'Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change', *The Historical Journal* 12, no. 3 (1969): 468.

three women were committed evangelicals, a summary of its role within Protestantism is offered for context.

Evangelicalism, described by Hilton as an '*un*mysterious form of worship', permeated the Protestant world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[3] The meaning of the term has evolved; originally meaning 'of the gospel,' it described churches of the Reformation since the sixteenth century. The influential evangelical movement which appeared in England from the 1730s originated in Europe, becoming a worldwide phenomenon and can be understood as a spectrum influencing mainly Christian Protestant denominations, which retained their distinctive doctrines while subscribing to evangelical soteriology, a doctrine emphasising man's sinfulness, quest for salvation and atonement through Christ's sacrifice.[4] This thesis is concerned with Protestantism as England's dominant religion since the Reformation. The modern evangelical movement first emerged in England from 1738 principally through the efforts of ordained Anglicans George Whitefield, and John and Charles Wesley, creators of Methodism, then part of the Anglican Church. By 1791 Wesley was dead, and new leaders transformed Methodism into an independent protestant denomination, which led to schisms,

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[3] Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP), 2001, first published 1986), 7-8.

[4] D.W. Bebbington*, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995, first published 1989), 3; see also: David Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31, no.2 (1980).

including that of Primitive Methodism, featured here.[5] Political, social and economic events in the late eighteenth century, not least the French Revolution, generated debate about social control, leading to an evangelical campaign beginning in the Anglican Church in the 1790s, which spread throughout Protestantism.[6] A main driver was a group of influential laymen, especially those associated with the Clapham Sect, which conceptualised a system of reform of spiritual and civic manners and morals. Originators of this group included M.P. William Wilberforce, Lord Teignmouth and other men, but Hannah More also contributed many ideas.[7] The evangelical campaign, though immensely influential,

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[5] G.M. Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival* (London: University College London (hereafter UCL), 1998), 87-8.

[6] For evangelical revivals see: John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006); M.J.D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787-1886* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004); Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*; Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival;* David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and popular religion c.1750-1900 (London: Routledge, 1996).*

[7] John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism, 11-13, 43-67. For the Clapham sect see:* Wolffe, John. 2005 "Clapham Sect (act. 1792–1815)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*). http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-42140; accessed 21 Aug. 2018; Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

did not include everyone; Quakers had retreated before it, eschewing show and charismatic preaching, but not every Quaker agreed with that policy.[8]

Abiah Darby (1716-1794)

The Society of Friends

The Religious Society of Friends, known as the Quakers, a radical Protestant sect, was founded by George Fox in the 1650s as an individualistic mystical belief system emphasising equality. Central to that belief was the presence of the divine seed or Inner Light in every individual, which took precedence over other authorities, including the State, the doctrine of the Trinity and interpretation of the Gospel.[9] The Society had no ordained ministers; lay men and women evangelized, and in the 1650s and 1660s became known for their public, charismatic prophesying and preaching, and their radical opposition to the union of the state with the Church of England. Following the Restoration, Anglican authority was re-established, and Dissenters from the Anglican faith were denied full civic rights, with Quakers persecuted for their clamorous resistance. Gregory suggests that from the 1660s public preaching by women was too closely linked with the political and social radicalism of the Civil War and with 'a world … turned upside down'.[10]

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[8] Sheila Wright*, Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780-1860* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), 21; Holton, *Quaker Women,* 9-11.

[9] Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780-1930* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 9-13.

[10] Jeremy Gregory, 'Gender and the Clerical Profession in England, 1660-1850', in *Gender and Christian Religion: Studies in Church History* Vol. 34, edited by R. N. Swanson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 239-40. Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: a Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of

Quaker reforms were introduced from the mid-1660s, including a disciplinary system which censored Quaker publications and certified preachers to maintain discipline. The Society also repudiated violence and promised peace and loyalty from Quaker citizens.[11] Women continued to preach, and from 1671 separate women's meetings administered discipline, subject to ratification by the men's meetings, confirming women's spiritual equality but instigating secular inequality.[12] A revised theology, developed in the 1670s mainly by Robert Barclay and William Penn, introduced a quietist form of meditation, silent worship and closed meetings.[13] Prophesying continued but was restricted to closed meetings. Only passive resistance to perceived injustices such as church tithes was allowed, and plain dress encouraged. By the end of the seventeenth century, these measures earned the Society of Friends a new reputation as sober, respectable people.[14] Holton, Wright and Mack agree that the quietist turn gradually made Quakers an inward-looking community who were seen by many outsiders as 'a peculiar

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Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities, 1770-1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2000), 8; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press (hereafter UCP), 1989),1-2.

[11] Ibid., 280-284.

[12] Ibid., 285-292; Holton, *Quaker Women*, 10-11.

[13] Robert Barclay*, An Apology for the True Christian Divinity: being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and doctrines of the People Called Quakers* (New York: Wood, 1827, first published 1675), 320; Mack, *Visionary Women*, 282-4.

[14] Ibid., 2; Holton, *Quaker Women,* 11.

people'.[15] Between 1680 and 1800 membership halved, from 55,000 to 19,800, but Mack and Walvin emphasise Quaker commercial, financial and intellectual successes, which suggests, perhaps, that material interests were occupying increasing amounts of male Quakers' time and energies.[16]

Quakers were receptive to women's spiritual authority, although within limits, linked as it was to their virtue and the religious metaphor of woman as a vessel of God.[17] Domestic duties were regarded by Quaker women as 'a snare that would distract them from their obedience to God' and felt this authorised them to put ministry before domestic duties. Such beliefs not only set Quakers apart but, Pamela Walker argues, brought their community together in 'a shared culture of opposition' by the 1780s.[18] Women were by then sustaining the ministry; Plant, for example, has shown that between 1766 and 1835 there were ninety-six recorded

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[15] Holton, 10-11; Wright, *Friends*, 15-6; Mack, *Visionary Women*, 356-7.

[16] Mack, *Visionary Women,* 356-7; Wright, *Friends* 15-18; A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976), 40; Phyllis Mack, 'In a Female Voice: Preaching and Politics in Eighteenth-Century British Quakerism', in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity,* edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (London: UCP, 1998), 250; James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: Murray: 1997), 3-4.

[17] Mack, *Visionary Women*, 23.

[18] Pamela J. Walker, 'Women, Preaching and Spiritual Authority', in *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures,* edited by Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries (London: Routledge, 2010), 108-09.

female preachers to sixty-seven male preachers in the Monthly Meetings of Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting.[19] This section examines the ministry of one such woman, Abiah Darby, who began to preach in the Midlands from 1748.

Business

As the wife of highly successful ironmaster Abraham Darby II (1711-1763) of Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, Abiah Darby (1716-1794) was fully involved in the family enterprise in much the same way as Sally Wedgwood was in the second-half of the eighteenth century.[20] Abiah Sinclair (née Maude) of Sunderland and Abraham Darby II were both widowed prior to their marriage in March 1746. Abraham had a daughter, Hannah, from his first marriage; Abiah's first husband, John Sinclair, and their daughter had died in about 1737. Abraham and Abiah had seven children, four of whom survived childhood. Darby's father, Abraham Darby I, an ironmaster from Dudley in Worcestershire, established foundries in Coalbrookdale in 1710. When Abraham II took charge in the 1730s his innovations stimulated an ambitious expansion of the Coalbrookdale Company which, Barrie Trinder suggests, made the Shropshire Coalfield the chief iron-producing area in Britain for several decades.[21]

Though not engaged in the day to day running of the company, Abiah had sufficient commercial authority to write on business matters to the Earl of Gower's

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[19] Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent', 131.

[20] See Chapter 1.

[21] Barrie Trinder, *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire* (Stroud: Phillimore, 2016, first published 1973), 30; see also: Rachel Labouchere, *Abiah Darby of Coalbrookdale: Wife of Abraham Darby II* (York: Sessions, 1988).

agent in Abraham's absence, and in 1763 provided an anonymous enquirer with a comprehensive account of his innovative iron processes, illustrating her considerable knowledge of the complex business.[22] In addition, she ran the family malting operation, and her signature on a mortgage deed of £1,000 suggests that there was within the Darby marriage a greater financial equality than often existed outside Quaker circles.[23] The Darbys were part of a complex matrix of religious, business and kinship networks, to which Abiah contributed through her hospitality and correspondence, as well as her ministry. In a similar way to the Unitarian kinship network which supported the Wedgwood enterprise, the Darbys were intimately linked to other Quaker families in the Midlands and beyond, including the Reynolds and Goldneys of Bristol, and the Rathbones of Liverpool, who invested in the company and performed managerial functions, enabling its expansion. Thomas Goldney acted as trustee for the Darby children, with

[22] From Abiah Darby to Mr Taylor, Earl Gower's agent, 18 September 1859, quoted in Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 85. Abraham Darby leased mines from the Earl of Gower at Ketley. Abiah Darby to unknown correspondent, 1763, MS LAB/ABI/4/2, Labouchere Collection, Ironbridge Gorge Museum Library and Archives, Ironbridge, Shropshire; Trinder, *The Industrial Revolution,* 29-31. 'Coalbrookdale Company' refers to the Darby family's collective businesses, see Arthur Raistrick, *Dynasty of Iron Founders* (York: Sessions, 1989, first published 1953), especially chapter 1.

[23] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 67. The Maltings supplied several foundries in the valley: Raistrick, *Dynasty,* 228-9.

apprenticeships and intermarriage further reinforcing the networks which, Raistrick argues, formed one of the firm's greatest assets.[24]

In turn, the Darbys offered hospitality in their Shropshire home, Sunniside, situated above the isolated valley of Coalbrookdale. Abiah played a central role in providing this hospitality to a steady stream of visitors. Step-daughter Hannah observed in 1753 that they had 'so many comers and goers that we forget it's the country'.[25] Their commercial and industrial network included local Anglican gentry who leased coalfields, iron-ore works and quarries to the Coalbrookdale Company. Tourists, including Erasmus Darwin of the Lunar Society and Anna Seward, who commemorated her visit in poetry, came for the sublime scenery of the steep Ironbridge Gorge.[26] In addition, Abiah maintained an epistolary network with family

[24] Raistrick, *Dynasty*, 1; Richard Reynolds was apprenticed to Abraham II by Thomas Goldney in 1756; he married Abraham's daughter Hannah in 1757 and ran the company from 1763: see Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 81; similar examples can be seen in Holton, *Quaker Women*, chapter 10; Mary Rose, 'The Family Firm in British Business, 1780-1914', in *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain: From the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century,* edited by Maurice Kirby and Mary Rose (London: Routledge, 1994), 75,107; see also Chapter 1 of this thesis.

[25] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 59.

[26] Labouchere, *Abiah Darb*y, 80-81, 212.

and friends nationwide.[27] Thus, Abiah was well-connected socially, culturally and politically.

Ministry

In addition to her domestic and business roles, Abiah Darby, having been brought up as a devout Quaker, developed a strong sense of mission and became a travelling preacher from 1751. Her faith had intensified following her first widowhood in 1737, perhaps through grief.[28] Significantly, Abraham Darby fully supported her ministry.[29] Darby's decision to become a minister may also have been influenced by her more famous friend, Catherine Phillips (1727-1794), (née Payton), of Dudley, Worcestershire who began her ministry in spring 1748 at the age of twenty-two.[30] Abiah announced her own calling that autumn, employing 'the very same words I should have opened my mouth with when fifteen and seventeen years of age'.[31]

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[27] For epistolary networks see Linda Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and the Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press (hereafter PUP), 2009).

[28] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 8-11.

[29] Ibid., 47.

[30] Skidmore, Gil. 2004 "Phillips [née Payton], Catherine (1727–1794), Quaker minister and writer." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22145; accessed 29 Aug. 2018.

[31] Cox, Nancy. 2004 "Darby [née Maude; other married name Sinclair], Abiah (1716–1794), Quaker minister." *ODNB;*

In May 1751 Abiah was granted a certificate by the Shrewsbury Meeting to travel to the north of England, thus beginning a thirty-five-year ministry.[32] Most of her mission took place in the privacy of Quaker women's meetings in which she led prayers, preached or prophesied, although she also felt a strong urge to evangelise in public. By the mid-eighteenth century, Quakers had retreated from public preaching. 'Open' meetings aimed at non-Quakers were still held, but they had decreased, were carefully managed and held in booths to meet the requirements of the 1664 Conventicle Act, which remained on the Statute book until 1812. This act was ambiguous, allowing magistrates hostile to Dissenters to claim draconian powers in their localities, including the use of force.[33] Spontaneous street preaching was therefore discouraged and could be subject to disciplinary measures by the Society.[34] As Wright has shown in her study of Quakerism in York, the spiritual vigour of the seventeenth century was replaced in the eighteenth by a 'cloistered psychology'; it was in this changed atmosphere that Darby began her work as a travelling minister in 1751 with a tour in the north of England along with other Quakers.[35]

Darby's activities should be understood in the context of her religious convictions and her status as the wife of a wealthy, influential and well-connected industrialist,

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http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-55521; 29 Aug. 2018.

[32] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 51.

[33] For the Conventicle Act see: Hempton, *The Religion of the People,* 114, 146-47.

[34] Mack*, Visionary Women,* 388-9.

[35] Wright, *Friends*, 15.

which made her relationship with her travelling companions an uneasy one. Many roads beyond the towns were impassable by carriage, so for ministers of Darby's social status, travel was usually undertaken on horseback. The dangers of such travel in remote country came as a shock to Darby. She was thrown from her horse and her Quaker companions 'rid so fast it hurt me'. Her ability to fund her own costs, including a horse, showed her status as a woman of means, so it was to her annoyance that her companions quibbled over lodging charges.[36] Despite such problems, Darby's first ministry confirmed her religious conviction. Attending Quaker meetings at many towns en route, speaking at some of them, she experienced 'a remarkably favoured time'.[37] Travelling via Warrington to Lancaster, Darby stayed with the Rawlinsons, business associates and friends of the Darbys. This set the usual pattern of her ministering tours: lodging mainly as a paying guest of fellow Quakers, maintaining vital business and social as well as religious networks. From Kendall she crossed to Durham and Sunderland where she met Abraham, travelling with him to Newcastle to preach while he discussed business with his agent in the north, in a demanding schedule that illustrates the connections between Quaker religion, business and kinship.[38]

As her experience grew, so did Darby's determination to evangelise beyond the boundaries of Quaker women's meetings, although she made every effort to obtain premises for the purpose, thus avoiding wrangles with local magistrates. Her desire to address the troops in Berwick on a northern trip in 1758, for

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[36] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 51-2.

[37] *Ibid.,* 53.

[38] *Ibid*., 52-3.

example, demonstrates her negotiating skills, as well as her willingness to make use of her connections. A request to address troops, coming from a pacifist Quaker, was hardly likely to be acceded to, especially near the Scottish border, within memory of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. But by obtaining a letter of introduction through Abraham from the Bridgnorth MP, Sir Thomas Whitmore of Apley Park, to his brother, General William Whitmore, commander of the northern forces, Abiah Darby undercut potential opposition to her request.[39] Abraham's county connections with the elder Whitmore ensured that courtesy was extended to his wife, and she publicly addressed the troops, along with some townspeople, on the barrack square in Berwick. She was also able to obtain permission from the mayor of Berwick to hold a public meeting in the new, classically-styled town hall but, probably to avoid compromising their position with the local Anglican landowners, often hostile to Dissenters, the Mayor and the Sheriff both absented themselves from town for the day.[40] Darby was thus able to negotiate access to public as well as private spaces for her religious activities using her status and class, and in a way that Rendall and Klein suggest complicates the idea of a 'single version of the public sphere'. Klein also shows that women could exploit

[39] Labouchere, Abiah Darby, 85.

[40] Extract of Abiah Darby's Journal, 1759 in *Journal of Friends Historical Society* (April 1913), MS Lab/Misc./18, 85, Ironbridge Archives; Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 87-8.

spaces between the multiple areas of public life such as those ‘pertaining to the state’ or the ‘associative public sphere’. [41]

However contingent or unstable, such opportunities were taken by women like Abiah Darby to appear in public and deliver their message, accustoming people to their presence. Furthermore, as an active Quaker who paid fines rather than pay church tithes, Darby clearly had an oppositional stance to anything which denied Quakers full civic liberties, so the act of obtaining a Town Hall, a symbol of civic pride, in which to present her religion to the public, must be interpreted as a political as well as a religious act. Darby was also one of the eighteenth-century Quaker women who originated the links leading to the ‘transatlantic sisterhood’, later so integral, as Midgley observes, to the American anti-slavery campaigns. In 1759, her skill in writing religious pamphlets was recognised. She recorded: ‘At Yearly Meeting at London...by request wrote Epistle to the women Friends in Pensilvania’ [sic].[42] Historians Mack and Plant both deplore the fact that women

[41] Jane Rendall, ‘Women and the Public Sphere’, *Gender & History* 11, no.3 (1999): 482; Lawrence Klein, ‘Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, (1995):104.

[42] Author unknown, ‘Extracts from the Diary of Abiah Darby’ (June 1759), MS LAB/Misc./18,85, Ironbridge Archives; Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992),127. Begun by Abiah and her contemporaries, the American connection was continued by Mary Lloyd in the nineteenth century. See chapter 3 of thesis and: Frederick B. Tolles, editor, ‘Slavery

waited nearly forty years, until 1784, before gaining permission to hold their own Yearly Meetings. However, Abiah's account of the 1759 Epistle to the women of Pennsylvania strongly suggests that British female Quakers had instigated *de facto* female Yearly Meetings at least twenty-five years earlier. Women employed a variety of strategies to circumvent gender barriers, and here Quaker women created a national network with an international reach.[43]

Darby exploited to the full the opportunities provided by her class and status to access powerful individuals in provincial civic life in pursuit of religious goals. On a trip to the West Country in 1760, when in Bristol, Abiah's mind 'was under very heavy Exercise, it appearing to be my place to visit the Mayor of this City'. The mayors of Bristol, Gloucester and Worcester all listened to her exhortations politely.[44] She published and distributed homilies to the people of Shrewsbury in 1752 and Hereford in 1755, warning them of the need to save their souls.[45]

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and "The Woman Question": Lucretia Mott's Diary of her Visit to Great Britain', *Journal of Friends' Historical Society,* supplement*,* 23*,* (1952): 18.

[43] Phyllis Mack, 'Religion, Feminism and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism', Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 23, no. 1 (2003):172; Helen Plant, 'Subjective Testimonies: Women Quaker Ministers and Spiritual Authority in England:1750-1825', Gender & History 15, no. 2 (2003): 311-13.

[44] Labouchere*, Abiah Darby*, 96-7.

[45] Abiah Darby, *A Serious Warning to the Inhabitants of Shrewsbury*, (Shrewsbury, 1752); *An Epistle to the Inhabitants of Hereford* (Salop: Cotton and Eddowes, 1755).

Darby's preaching and evangelising was also extended to dinner guests at Sunniside. These were not family prayers, which were conducted privately, but were extempore utterances by Abiah at the end of meals when business acquaintances were present, described by Abiah as 'Gentlemen and company'. She would record: 'often engaged to address the Great name at Table', and almost always added that this was 'a great cross to the natural will', but felt 'condemned' if she ignored the call.[46] Thus, Abiah not only used the status and contacts provided by the family business to access a wider audience for her preaching, but also felt moved to minister to the business contacts themselves.

Risks

The potential dangers of breaking the law on preaching or the limitations placed on Quaker women's ministry by the male leadership, are not to be underestimated. Darby's friend Katherine Phillips, whose ministry was highly valued, received a caution from leading Quaker Samuel Fothergill when she preached to Oxford students in 1751, warning her against 'large meetings in court houses'.[47] Meetings in public buildings were not the only areas of contention. Darby was sometimes drawn to preach in the street but risked contravening the Conventicle Act. Some magistrates treated outdoor preaching as an illegal activity, especially land-owning Anglican clerics on the magistrates' bench who resented the presence of what

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See also: *Useful Instruction for Children* (London: Phillips, 1819, first published 1754), MS LAB/MISC 43.

[46] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 74.

[47] Samuel Fothergill to Catherine Payton, March 1751, in *Memoirs of Samuel Fothergill* (London: Cash, 1857), 124; Mack, 'In a Female Voice', 252.

they saw as Nonconformist radicals in their parishes.[48] Antagonistic clerics could agitate local feeling against travelling preachers and conversely, anti-clerical feeling could lead to Nonconformist street preachers being harried or assaulted.[49] In 1759 Darby sought permission to hold a meeting in the town hall at Morpeth, but was refused by the magistrate, Oliver Nayler, who was also the local Anglican priest. He answered, 'with a sneer, that he sometimes let it out to Rope Dancers and Players'.[50] Darby and her party withdrew. This reaction says much about the strength of local loyalties. Darby had found co-operation in the north from the Sheriff and Mayor of Berwick, probably showing deference to General Whitmore. Yet in Morpeth, where her religious denomination and family had no authority, Nayler's first loyalty was probably to the local Anglican gentry, who may have been displeased to see a Nonconformist installed in the Town Hall. This suggests the continued importance of political, social, religious and patronage networks in the provinces, where institutions and Societies were slower to establish themselves than in the growing urban towns. Darby appreciated their value and cultivated them assiduously.

Visiting the cathedral city of Hereford in 1760 with fellow Quakers, and not so far from home, her strategy was bolder. She expressed the need to 'speak to the leading men of the City' but her Quaker companions, concerned because the

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[48] For debates on the writ of the Toleration and Conventicle Acts see: Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 145-151.

[49] Deborah Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton: PUP, 1985), 134.

[50] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 89.

Quarter Sessions were sitting, persuaded her to continue to Ross. However, Darby returned to Hereford the following day, requesting use of the Town Hall from the mayor. Although she produced her preaching certificate, 'he was afraid' to give permission, probably because the Bishop was in residence. Darby then obtained an audience with the Bishop, James Beauclerk, son of the Duke of St Albans. He asked if she had come to discuss tithes, to which she replied that she was 'engaged to come to speak to him from the Holy Spirit'. He responded, 'we don't hear of such things', and when Darby continued, he ended the interview. On returning to the inn she wrote to him saying that as a Bishop he 'should be stirr'd up and cloathed with Zeal for the Souls of the People, against vice and immorality'. Still distressed, she returned to Hereford, 'drawn to go forward' to the market Cross. She wrote:

> I stopp'd short … and lifted up my voice as a Trumpet. The people were surprised, one man sprang out to me asking 'what is the matter, Madam?' but I took no notice and went to another place and spoke and then to the Cross to the steps leading to the Hall and there had an open time.[51]

This suggests that Darby was prophesying charismatically, raising her voice in the street, inspired by her religious agency. 'I delivered my message in Great Dread, called to repentance and enumerating the many blessings received'.[52] Her stance

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[51] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby, 95.*

[52] Ibid.; Charismatic: One who claims prophetic inspiration, *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter OED) Online, Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP). http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/30722? December 2016.

by the cross is suggestive of her seeking sanctuary from potential violence or arrest for breaching the law. One of the Bishop's men was in the crowd, but people heard her quietly. Returning to the inn she broke down 'in a profusion of weeping'.[53] By such behaviour, Darby was harking back to an earlier, seventeenth-century model of Quakerism, emotional and almost disorderly. Mack has observed that by the end of the seventeenth century 'Women as prophets retired behind closed doors of the meeting house', yet in 1760 Darby was lifting her voice 'as a trumpet' in various locations in Hereford's streets, in a way that challenged the authority of church and state, as well as the Quaker leadership.[54]

However, it is questionable whether Darby was really risking arrest, assault or disownment by the Society. Firstly, she had no difficulty in obtaining immediate interviews with the mayor and the Bishop, suggesting that the Darbys' social capital was high in Hereford. Secondly, Abiah was known to John Fletcher, the intellectual Rector of Madely, Shropshire, who may have mentioned her beneficial, if irritating, influence in his parish, to the Bishop. Thirdly, the man in the crowd addressed her as 'Madam', suggesting that her demeanour and clothes identified her as a woman of status. Her writings show that she was articulate, and the people heard her respectfully, suggesting she was impressive rather than wildly incoherent. Darby used her class and status, signalled by her social capital, her networks and her clothes, as protection.

Darby recorded her experiences in her journal, an introspective spiritual autobiography. Peterson and others have shown that such writings usually

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[53] Labouchere, *Abiah Darby*, 95.

[54] Mack, *Visionary Women*, 2.

represent variations on a theme of an exemplary spiritual journey.[55] Using formulaic rhetorical Biblical phrases, they describe Quaker lives as colourful struggles of opposing forces; their roots lie in Puritanism, and their popularity was so enduring many early versions were republished in the nineteenth century.[56] One that was first published around 1723, was *A Legacy,* later republished as *Piety Promoted*, by Alice Hayes (1657-1720). Darby, an avid reader, may have been familiar with this example of the genre.[57] Peterson observes that Hayes was convinced of her right to speak.[58] But Mack also notes how Hayes' work reflected a 'new, highly complex emotional vocabulary', one which emphasised spiritual fragility and self-analysis, although she accepts that Hayes' quietist, mystical

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[55] Linda Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (London: University Press of Virginia (hereafter UPV), 1999), 6; Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University press, (hereafter JHUP), 1989), 157; Mack, *Visionary Women,* 404; see also: Vicki Tolar Collins, 'Walking in Light, Walking in Darkness: The Story of Women's Changing Rhetorical Space in Early Methodism', *Rhetoric Review* 14, no. 2 (1996); D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

[56] William and Thomas Evans, editors, *The Friends' Library*, 15 vols. (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1850).

[57] Alice Hayes, *A Legacy, or a Widow's Mite, left by Alice Hayes* (London; Sowle, 1723).

[58] Peterson, *Traditions*, 14.

activities contrast with her practicality in business matters.[59] These complexities equally apply to Darby, who was certain about her need to speak, yet recorded distressing self-doubt when called to exhort or prophesy, as in Hereford. In the same journal we see her dealing competently with business matters, tithes, preparing religious articles and entertaining a stream of visitors to her home. Mack argues that many 'new' women - well read, articulate and authors of theological commentary, as Abiah was, 'presented themselves as fragmented, isolated and fragile, both physically and emotionally', and we are left to choose, by both Mack and Peterson, whether we take the humility and self-doubt as 'real inner consciousness or as a narrative strategy'.[60]

Abiah Darby was one of a core of women ministers who sustained the Quaker community through their mid-eighteenth-century nadir of faith, although her ministry fitted uneasily into contemporary Quakerism; on the one hand she anticipated the new wave of evangelicalism of the 1780s; on the other she reverted to a seventeenth-century style of charismatic preaching, prophesying and exhorting, but in neither did she reflect the dominant quietism of modern Quakerism. Her ministry can perhaps best be understood as a form of discreet religious and political activism through which she could negotiate for herself a unique identity as a Quaker minister, which others acknowledged. Darby negotiated access to public figures and places not generally open to women or to Quakers, successfully delivering her religious message. That success was due to her strategic skills, and her use of the social and cultural status of her pious and

[59] Mack, *Visionary Women*, 354-55.

[60] Mack, *Visionary Women*, 405-6; Peterson, *Traditions,* 13.

commercially successful family. Mack notes that eighteenth-century women prophets were no longer chastising 'magistrates and monarchs in the public arena', yet Abiah Darby brought her religious authority to bear on bishops and mayors, representatives of the social and cultural barriers she successfully negotiated.[61]

Elizabeth Smith (1805-1836)
Primitive Methodism

The Primitive Methodist Connexion, an evangelizing sect which borrowed some elements of Quakerism, was established in 1811 by Hugh Bourne (1772-1852) and William Clowes (1780-1851) following their expulsion from the Wesleyan Methodists for holding American-style revivalist camp meetings.[62] Between 1797 and 1820, continental war and sequential economic depression brought social and political change charged with radicalism, and Methodism faced several divisions; MacCulloch argues that this fissiparous period in Wesleyan Methodism was also

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[61] Mack, 'In a Female Voice', 249.

[62] Boase, G. (2013, May 30).' Bourne, Hugh (1772–1852), founder of the Primitive Methodist church'.

ODNB; http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3005; accessed 9 Jan. 2019.

Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (hereafter The Connexion) (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1984), 55-7, 65-6; H.B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church,* 2 vols. (London: Dalton, c.1906), 1:1. See also: William Clowes, *The Journal of William Clowes* (London: Hallam, 1844).

partly due to John Wesley's failure to deal in a timely manner with issues relating to the Society's identity and governance.[63] Following Wesley's death in 1791, the Wesleyan leadership remodelled the Society as an established Protestant denomination, as the Society of Friends, had done a century before. The disciplinary system, developed to counter accusations from some Parliamentarians of radicalism within Methodism, included a ban on public female preaching from 1803 and on unauthorised preaching and camp meetings from 1807.[64] Bourne, who was running Methodist revival missions, defied the ban and held camp meetings on the North Midland moors for poor agricultural and mining communities. This, together with his connection to known radicals, like American Lorenzo Dow and James Crawfoot, a rural mystic, led to his expulsion. Bourne and Clowes incorporated Crawfoot's blend of Methodism, Quakerism and the supernatural into their early movement, but otherwise retained the orthodox

[63] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters,*19-21, 79; Werner, *The Connexion*, 3-4; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Penguin, 2010), 753. For an analysis of the causes of this schism see: Werner, *The Connexion*, chapter 1; Jennifer Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers, 1807-190*7 (Manchester: Manchester University Press (hereafter MUP), 2009), 52-58.

[64] Between 1795 and 1811 there were serious political and ecclesiastical efforts, sponsored by Lord Sidmouth, to curtail itinerant preaching. See: Werner, *The Connexion*, 6-8; for active radicalism within Methodism see, for example, Hempton, *The Religion of the People,* 110-119, 156-7.

Methodist doctrine of salvation in the form of assurance and perfection.[65] The Primitive Methodists returned to Wesley's early pastoral practices such as field preaching and his advice to early followers to preach 'the way the primitive Methodists did', giving the new sect its name.[66]

Bourne's thoughts on women preachers, which he published, were positive, unlike those of the Wesleyans. His motive had less to do with women's equality than achieving his evangelizing programme.[67] Women preachers drew the crowds and were economic: in 1820 women were paid £2 a quarter, men £15 a year. The presence of women within this resurgence of popular religion signalled a rejection of the established religious status the Wesleyans sought, offering an alternative community and values to dissatisfied Methodists, especially women.[68] As the Wesleyan Methodists bid for religious establishment, membership costs rose; in contrast, Primitive Methodism's early success was due to Bourne's insistence on maintaining low-cost membership.[69] Valenze has argued that the Primitives 'overturned the patriarchal assumptions of chapel administration', and signalled an 'important new phase of independent religious activity', although like the Wesleyans, they did not admit women to the executive.[70] By the mid-nineteenth

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[65] Werner, *The Connexion*, 60-78, 147; Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters,* 79-81; Kendall, *The Origin*, 82-4.

[66] Quoted in Werner, *The Connexion*, 77.

[67] Hugh Bourne, *Remarks on the Ministry of Women* (1808); Lloyd, *Women 68-9.*

[68] Werner, *The Connexion*, 141-3, 157.

[69] Ibid., 74-5.

[70] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 93, 88.

century the Primitive Methodists, like the Wesleyans and Quakers before them, would curtail female preaching in pursuit of establishment status, thus materializing the effect described in 'Thirsk's Law': that the opening up of important roles for women in all new enterprises is followed by their repression once the male hierarchy is established.[71] Nevertheless, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Wesleyan Methodism's efforts to join the religious establishment unintentionally unleashed an alternative religious movement and placed women preachers at its heart.

Early Years

Elizabeth Smith (1805-1836) was born and died in Ludlow, Shropshire, but in between she travelled widely in Wales, the south of England, and the Midlands, creating an identity for herself as an itinerant preacher with a reputation for tenacity within the Primitive Methodist Connexion. The main source of this analysis is her auto/biography, which was unfinished at her early death in 1836 but completed by her husband, Thomas Russell, who she had married in 1833. Incorporated in the memoir are surviving letters and journal extracts written by Smith. Published serially in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* in 1837 and in pamphlet form in 1838, the autobiography was presented as a conversion narrative, a popular form of evangelical exemplary text designed to encourage converts.[72] Nevertheless, Smith's memoir was not entirely inward-looking, as she

[71] 'Thirsk's Law', by Joan Thirsk, 1993, quoted in Hempton, *The Religion of the People,* 181.

[72] See: *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 5, (1837); Thomas Russell, editor, *The Life and Labours of Elizabeth Russell (hereafter Life and Labours)* (Bemersley: Bourne,

recorded her experiences against the background of significant changes to agrarian life and society. Valenze argues that the labouring poor's adherence to the popular evangelicalism of the Primitives and other sects, 'indicated a rejection of existing power relations within nation and village'. More controversially, perhaps, Valenze suggests that Primitive Methodist preachers such as Smith were themselves involved in this social and political struggle.[73]

Like Abiah Darby almost a century earlier, Smith experienced a strong religious calling but her route to and experience of the ministry were very different. Her lower-middle-class family background was much more modest than that of Darby. Following the failure of her father's glove wholesaling business and his death, Smith lived with her grandmother, Mrs Powell. Little is known of this 'industrious and moral' woman, but Valenze suggests she was a staunch Anglican. Certainly, Smith attended the National Society school, which Owen observes 'functioned as a Church of England auxiliary' and she was later in service with an Anglican family.[74] At about the age of eleven she had been apprenticed as a dressmaker, presumably by Powell, whose ability to purchase an indenture would suggest that she possessed independent means. When later employed as a dresser to an actress, Smith rejected religion, but at sixteen was sent to care for the children of a respectable Anglican family in London, probably through her grandmother's

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1838). Women's spiritual auto/biographies are explored in Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography*.

[73] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 22, 139.

[74] Russell, *Life and Labours*, 3-4; Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters,* 124; David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (London: OUP, 1964), 118.

contacts. Powell may have thought this disciplined environment more suitable for her granddaughter than dressmaking and the theatre, with their links to immorality and prostitution.[75] Confused by religious thoughts, Smith sought help from a Ludlow friend, who put her in touch with a female Primitive Methodist preacher. Following an exchange of letters, in December 1825 Smith experienced a religious conversion. However, when her mistress discovered that she had become a Methodist, Smith was sent home.[76]

Ministry

In 1826, upon returning to Ludlow, a growing town whose leisure facilities catered for the gentry and the prosperous middle classes, Smith began a dressmaking business, renting a space in a neighbour's house where, according to her future husband, Thomas Russell, she soon gained customers. The same year she joined the Ludlow Primitive Methodist circuit and despite her inexperience, was sent as a travelling preacher to raise a new mission in Radnorshire, mid-Wales.[77] In September 1826, having given up her business, twenty-one-year-old Smith walked unaccompanied some thirty miles to Radnorshire and began her first religious mission with the Presteigne branch.[78] For the next decade, until her early death in 1836, Smith was to preach throughout Shropshire, Radnorshire, Berkshire,

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[75] Russell, *Life and Labours*, 3-4; Alison Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship: Enterprise, Home and Household in London, circa 1800-1870* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 48, 73; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 437-8.

[76] Russell, *Life and Labours*, 7.

[77] Ibid., 8-9.

[78] Ibid.*,* 10.

Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Staffordshire, maintaining close links with the Midlands through her work and habitation in Shropshire, the Black Country, Birmingham and Longton. In the final decade of her short life, Smith's whole identity became tied up with her role as a preacher, unlike Abiah Darby, whose religious life suffused, but did not efface, the many other facets of her life. Working in inhospitable, often wild, areas, travelling entirely on foot alone, unless a passing carter offered a lift, this aspect of Smith's ministry contrasts sharply with that of the wealthier Darby, who could travel by horse and in safe company.

Such extraordinary physical adversity may have contributed to Smith's early death. Lloyd observes that between 1835 and 1837 on average more than a third more of Primitive Methodist women preachers were sick compared to the men. This is perhaps unsurprising considering that Smith's memoir records her regularly walking twenty miles a day in all weathers, with inadequate footwear and clothing.[79] Smith's main responsibilities were to evangelise, organise meetings and establish branches, often in scattered communities, but her strong sense of mission meant she always sought to extend the amount and range of her activities. Russell commented on 'the anguish of her soul' she experienced in 1831 while in Hampshire and Newbury, unable to preach to all those in need, which frequently led her to travelling 'near one hundred miles a week, and preaching eight or nine times, and visiting a number of families every day; as well as leading

[79] Lloyd, *Women*, 112.

classes &c.'[80] Unlike Darby, her ministry included not only preaching and evangelising, but also significant pastoral responsibilities.

Wales

In Radnorshire Smith experienced, as Hugh Bourne commented in his 'Observations' in her Memoir, 'enduring trouble and affliction in a thinly-inhabited country', but also created a life-long network of female correspondents who would sustain one another in their mission work.[81] Russell, her future husband and himself a Primitive Methodist itinerant preacher, recorded Smith's first ministry in Radnorshire as a success, with a number of meetings opened in local cottages.[82] However, Smith's letters to her friend Sarah Evans of Ludlow, also a Primitive Methodist, lacked Russell's optimism. Writing in December 1826 she admitted: 'I feel I have at this time to pass through the fire … But thanks be to God, I am resigned to his will … I feel this frail tenement sinks beneath the load. I do feel my body is fast sinking towards the grave'.[83] Russell observed that 'one of her greatest conflicts was temptation to atheism' and by January 1827 she had returned home ill and spiritually troubled.[84]

Smith's own reports on her health sound alarming, but Mack argues that Methodists 'write about pain and illness as *metaphors* for the sick soul … and as

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[80] Russell, *Life and Labours*, 41.

[81] 'Observations by Mr. H. Bourne', in Russell, *Life and Labours,* 12-13.

[82] Ibid., 11-12.

[83] Elizabeth Smith to Sarah Evans, 26 December 1826 in Russell, *Life and Labours,* 13.

[84] Ibid., 23.

medicines that would purge and heal the spirit'.[85] Four letters written to Evans between December 1826 and March 1827 explain Smith's ideas about her own spiritual and physical health, and suggest that writing was a helpful process for, restored, she returned to her work with the Presteigne branch.[86] In June 1827 she wrote to her friend again: 'the wanderers are coming in; and my soul is happy.' She felt that she was growing spiritually:

> I can address my dear Sarah with freedom … I have never told any one my [spiritual] state so fully as I have done in this letter. It is not because I have no one to talk to, but through timidity; lest they should think I say more than I know.[87]

Smith created a female network using correspondence to maintain her spiritual strength, fulfil her ministry, and support her friends in the Ludlow circuit. Such letters were intended to be shared within a circle of women friends. Epistolary networks helped religious women in minority sects to sustain their sense of communal religious bonding and, as Mack has shown in relation to Mary Fletcher and her circle, to cement female friendships, a core value of the Wesleyan renewal movement.[88] Through these networks women like Smith could explore doubts and fears about their physical and mental abilities. This was a reciprocal exchange, as

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[85] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gendered Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008) 172.

[86] Letters from Smith to Evans dated 27 December 1826, 4 January 1827, January 1827 (no day), 26 March 1827, in Russell, *Life and Labours,* 13-16.

[87] Smith to Evans, 12 June 1827, Ibid., 17-18.

[88] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 134-6.

a later sympathetic letter to Evans shows: 'I sincerely pity your present state … having had to pass through trials, if not of the same kind, yet quite as afflictive'.[89] Smith's next letter reveals a crisis in her own faith following a challenge by two clergymen over her right as a woman to preach:

> These men reprobated the idea of a woman being useful in their work; the enemy [Satan] backed their arguments: - and I was sensible of the vast importance of the work; which led me to cry … Who is sufficient for these things? Who among the sons of men? And much less a weak and ignorant young woman? … Through this reasoning, the Lord withdrew the light of his countenance.[90]

Under attack by educated men, Smith lost her confidence and for a time, her faith. Later that year, however, when challenged again on the subject, Smith showed that she had developed a strategy of presenting herself with eyes lowered, standing meekly and speaking quietly, to diffuse those tense situations where a male preacher might be attacked, as Russell sometimes was. At a meeting where she was due to preach, a hostile preacher first launched a verbal attack against the Primitives in general and then female preaching in particular. When Smith took the floor, Russell describes how 'all eyes were fixed on her' to see how she would respond, but when she began to speak she had the congregation in tears as her assailant 'stole away'.[91]

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[89] Smith to Evans, 16 March 1828, in Russell, *Life and Labours,* 20.

[90] Smith to Evans, 9 April 1828, in Russell, *Life and Labours*, 21.

[91] *Life and Labours,* 24.

Smith's letters exhibited a growing confidence in her religious authority, and she added correspondents in each new mission. According to Dorothy Graham, Smith was also in contact with female preachers in other circuits; in 1827 she explained to a friend that Sarah Welch of the Prees Circuit, who had been ill, was able to take up her duties again and 'I went with her to the first appointment'.[92]

As Mack has argued, writing 'went far beyond cathartic release', it released women's agency, 'both as individuals and as social actors'.[93] As Smith learnt to be an itinerant preacher, and perhaps because she understood the loneliness of mission work, she used her epistolary network to provide pastoral support to her women converts. Later, when sent to the south of England, Smith's letters became more distinctly pastoral; acting informally as a deaconess she guided and inspired other women within the Connexion. In a letter of December 1830, for example, she urged greater evangelising efforts. Although addressed to Sarah Mountford, the last paragraph shows that the letter was intended to be circulated among women in Mountford's branch. Smith concluded, utilising biblical language for greater effect: 'Armed with this, my sisters, we, though weak, shall wax strong and cast down the bulwarks of the devil's kingdom'.[94]

She was also the author of a rare surviving example of a Missionary speech made to a meeting in 1829 and approved by the circuit committee. It reveals missionary

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[92] Smith to Unknown, 29 April 1827, quoted in Dorothy Graham, 'Chosen by God: The Female Itinerants of Early Primitive Methodism' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013),152.

[93] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 25.

[94] Smith to Sarah Mountford, 28 December 1830, in Russell, *Life and Labours,* 36.

topics of the day and confirms Smith's 'style and command of language'. She also published a poem and a missionary prayer, which suggests she attempted to reach wider audiences.[95] It was through her epistolary network, however, that she seems to have been the most effective in inspiring other women to evangelize. A Mrs Barnes of Hook was one such woman. In 1830 Smith wrote: 'My dear Sister, The way opens in the mission wonderfully. Go on: confess the work of entire sanctification'.[96] Creating a network of supportive 'sisters' aided her own spiritual progress, as well as the cause of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

The South of England

From 1828 Smith was based at Brinkworth in Wiltshire, an area, according to Kendall, where 'persecution was the rule rather than the exception'. Nevertheless, her first mission, to Purton-Stoke, was so successful in encouraging the opening of a house for meetings, that the society eventually warranted a chapel.[97] Both Smith and her fellow preachers Thomas Russell and John Ride cultivated the support of better-off artisans and small farmers, in order to convince them to provide land and buildings for meetings, as the Connexion had few chapels outside towns before the 1840s.[98] In the 1820s, meetings held in cottages and workshops provided a sense of religious identity and community, and ensured the safety of worshippers from harassment. Following a service given by Smith at Ramsbury, where there

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[95] For the speech see: Graham, 'Chosen by God', 224-25; Lloyd, *Women,* 98. For the poem and the 'Missionary's Prayer' see: Russell, *Life and Labour*s, 25, 39.

[96] Smith to Mrs Barnes, 5 August 1830, in Russell, *Life and Labours*, 34.

[97] Kendall, *The Origin*, 2:330; Russell, *Life and Labours*, 26.

[98] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 274.

was often the threat of violence at outdoor meetings, the family of the local carpenter, John Alexander, persuaded him to licence his workshop for Primitive use.[99]

Many of the poor also proved willing to hold cottage meetings, which enabled Smith to build up local membership and create branches. Smith took pains to gain local confidence, particularly that of women, and did not hesitate to take advantage of the aura of magic that surrounded her ministry. Obelkevich and Valenze argue that folklore, superstition and the supernatural were enmeshed within popular religion, and were all important for conversion.[100] When rumours that Smith employed 'the black art, and black books' and was a fortune-teller drew the crowds out, she turned superstition to evangelical advantage. One woman requested to have her fortune told, but instead, Smith visited her home, taught her to pray and converted her. The woman donated land for a chapel, built in 1831.[101]

The journals and memoirs of male preachers such as John Ride and John Petty show that as a preacher, Elizabeth Smith was considered their equal, and often their superior in her ability to calm disruptive elements. John Petty, the Connexion's first historian, believed that Smith's abilities exceeded those of many men:

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[99] Russell, *Life and Labours*, 37.

[100] James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 276-299; Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 24-5, 88-9.

[101] Russell, *Life and Labours,* 34.

> Her modesty and good sense, her clear views of evangelical truth, her lucid statements, her solemn and pathetic appeals to the heart and conscience … made deep impressions and rendered her very useful among the peasantry in Hampshire.[102]

It was qualities such as her 'modesty', as well as a 'pathetic' demeanour, that Smith deployed in encounters with a potentially disruptive audience. In 1830, for example, she preached at Ramsbury, where youths had previously silenced Russell with shouts of 'Church and King - no Ranters here', rung cow bells, blown horns and threatened him. Smith walked through the crowd of young men who were armed with stones, towards a barn she had been offered, singing a hymn 'with her usual sweetness and pathos'. Russell describes how the ring leader, on seeing her, 'was awestruck' and ordered the others: 'None of you shall touch that woman'.[103] Even without the status and authority which had protected Darby from such threats, Smith demonstrated an ability, aided by her sober manner and Quaker dress, to deflect aggression. Kendall observes that Smith 'moved about amongst the rough crowds as though she had a charmed life', but it is more likely

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[102] Russell, *Life and Labours,* 25; John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London: Davies, 1860), 228; see also: 'Journal of John Ride', *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1832) 265-8; (1837) 179-180 quoted in Graham, 'Chosen by God', 154.

[103] Russell, *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (hereafter *Record*) (London: Lister, 1869), 29; Kendall, *The Origin,* 2:331.

that she used her experience to develop a quiet, yet authoritative persona which contrasted with the noisy enthusiasm of some of the male preachers.[104]

Her ministry seems to have been remarkably successful. She regularly preached at the camp meetings, such as one at Wanborough in July 1829, where four thousand people were said to be present.[105] She led the way in opening new missions in Hampshire and Shefford in the four years she was there, the latter's membership rising from five to eighteen-hundred during her residence. Smith and other travelling preachers encouraged the development of a cottage religion that was communal yet personal, which institutional worship could not match, helping to sustain communities of the rural poor. However, there is no evidence in either Smith's or Russell's writing to support Valenze's claim that she was a rebel speaking for a rural underclass.[106] She may have strengthened the resolve of local people with her sense of communal solidarity, but there was no record of her encouraging protest.[107] As with Abiah Darby, Smith's mission was purely spiritual, born of religious agency. As she said: 'I want to persuade others to come along with me'.[108]

Risks

At the time of Smith's ministry persecution and violence against the Primitive Methodists, by village labourers and landowners, was a reality. As Valenze has

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[104] Ibid., 2:331.

[105] Russell, *Life and Labours*, 27.

[106] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 139.

[107] Graham, 'Chosen by God', 22.

[108] Russell, *Life and Labours,* 17.

shown, the war with France was followed by a lengthy period of economic distress from 1815. Subsidies to wages had been ineffective and the Primitive Methodists, with their ability to draw crowds, fuelled the fear of labour unrest. Landlords and clerics went on the offensive, evicting tenants who hosted meetings and, as magistrates, refusing preaching licences. Anti-clericalism among the poor was sometimes vented on the Primitives.[109] Around 1832 youngsters from Childray supported Russell at Wantage and were attacked. As Russell recorded mournfully: 'it certainly was grievous to see our young friends … with their plain neat bonnets crushed down on their heads, and their clothes torn'. Smith's own meek demeanour did not always serve to protect her, and she experienced similar treatment in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1832.[110] The Connexion leadership encouraged 'martyrdom', as it stirred the enthusiasm of potential converts. While Thomas Russell was imprisoned for selling unlicensed publications in 1830, Smith advised him that people had donated money towards his fine, and she was confident the total could be raised 'if we thought it best'. She then told Russell, despite the ill-treatment he received in prison, that 'we are encouraged for you … you have to drink of your Master's cup'. It seems that Smith and her colleagues had decided that Russell was to remain a martyr.[111]

In his absence, Smith covered Russell's work by preaching at Chaddleworth, the scene of his arrest, from a cart. The Anglican priest, who was also the magistrate, began to take people into custody while Smith kneeled to pray. According to

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[109] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 134; Kendall, *The Origin*, 2: 330-1.

[110] Russell, *Record*, 100, 122.

[111] Russell, *Life and Labours,* 30-1; Russell, *Record*, 34-47.

Russell - who of course did not witness these events himself - when Smith stood up 'the sight was extraordinary': the magistrate apologised and said he hoped there had been no harm done, and a large society was later formed there.[112] Russell seemed to imply both that Smith had succeeded where he had failed, and that his own imprisonment had raised the profile of the mission. Other instances of danger averted were recorded by Russell, who used them to demonstrate the power and success of Smith's ministry. At Beenham, a clergyman's son fired a gun close to her four times as she preached, but Smith remained undeterred, and finally a chapel was built there.[113] Many of these incidents, though doubtless based on fact, were retold in such a way as to emphasise Primitive Methodists' willingness to be 'martyred' for their faith, helping to swell the ranks of the Connexion.

Elizabeth Smith's religious life was very different to that of Abiah Darby. She practiced her religious ministry in largely impoverished agricultural communities, developing a reputation for outstanding pastoral care, while her leadership, and ability to command respect from artisans and farmers, who provided land and buildings for meeting houses, were singled out by members who wrote about her. Even without the advantage of Darby's class, wealth and status, she developed considerable religious authority, for the most part derived from her loyalty to, and conformity with, the Connexion. When Hugh Bourne endorsed Smith's ministry as being 'in the true spirit of a Primitive Methodist Missionary, overcoming the difficulties by faith and labour … establishing the cause, and maintaining herself by

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[112] Russell, *Life and Labours,* 32.

[113] Ibid., 36-7; Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 135.

her own labours', he was drawing upon the contents of the Connexion manual for preachers.[114] Smith had been a model female preacher and the posthumous publication of her memoir by the Connexion was their public acknowledgement of her religious identity.

Catherine Marsh (1818-1912)
Anglicanism

The final subject of this chapter stands at the other end of the Protestant spectrum to Smith, being an ultra-Protestant. Catherine Marsh (1818-1912), an evangelical Anglican, developed her own personal ministry and gained national recognition for her work. This section examines the strategies employed by Marsh to extend what began as a private ministry into the public domain, despite being a member of the Anglican establishment, which offered no formal ministry role to women. Marsh, like her Anglican clerical father William, held strong ultra-Protestant views that stemmed from developments within evangelicalism from the 1820s.[115] Their brand

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[114] Bourne, 'Observations' in Russell, *Life and Labours*, 12; 'Advice to Travelling Preachers' in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 5, (1824).

[115] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism,* 2-3; for early theories of Evangelicalism see: Henry Venn, *Complete Duty of Man* (London: Newberry, 1763); William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity* (London: Johnstone Hunter, 1797); for developments in the conflation of Protestantism and Nationhood see: Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church and Nation, 1712-1812* (Oxford: OUP, 2012); Linda Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1994, first published 1992); For later developments of women's involvement in the religious

of Protestantism promoted 'pentecostal, pre-millenarian, adventist and revivalist elements', although, as Gleadle observes, on some issues 'there could be sharp divergences in opinion'.[116] Hempton suggests that this narrower evangelicalism was characterised by its 'Calvinism, anti-rationalism, anti-Catholicism and biblical literalism'.[117]

As Linda Colley has argued, Protestantism was a core element of British national identity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and Protestant agitation surfaced whenever that identity was threatened.[118] Fears of a Catholic invasion from France before 1815 and the passing of the Catholic Relief Act in 1829, for example, acted as triggers for vociferous anti-Catholicism and ultra-Protestantism. Partisan newspapers, like the *Morning Watch* and the *Record,* vigorously defended the protestant character of the English church and nation.[119] Catherine Marsh and her father subscribed to the *Record*, with Catherine contributing articles

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politics of evangelicalism and ultra-Protestantism see: Kathryn Gleadle, 'Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna and the Mobilization of Tory Women in Early Victorian England', *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2007); Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism,* 11-13,18-19; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism,* 75-104; Hilton, *The Age of Atonement,*1-35; Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology', 179-194.

[116] Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, 10; Gleadle, 'Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna', 99.

[117] Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology', 180.

[118] Colley*, Britons Forging the Nation*, xi.

[119] Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology',184; see also: John Wolffe, 'Haldane, Alexander, (1800-1882)', *ODNB*, OUP, 2004; http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37503; accessed 30 January 2017.

under the name 'Credo'.[120] William Marsh was a leading advocate of pre-millenialism, a belief that the coming of Christ to earth was imminent and would be followed by a millennium of his rule. Strongly opposed to Catholic emancipation from the 1820s he shared the Protestant Association platform with Hugh McNeil, who, Gleadle argues, fashioned 'a populist tory programme around an acerbic anti-Catholicism'.[121] Such rhetoric appealed to all levels of society, and by 1855 it was said that a majority of evangelical clergy and many laymen held pre-millennial views.[122]

It was in this sometimes febrile religious atmosphere that Catherine Marsh grew up, absorbing her father's opinions. While some evangelicals rejected the need for evangelising and philanthropy in the face of an imminent second advent, for others 'the shortness of the time was a call to action'. These included Marsh and his daughter.[123] The latter channelled her energies enthusiastically into conversion in the name of a Protestant God, and into politics in the name of Tory Ultra-

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[120] O'Rorke, *Life,* 331-2; Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, 10.

[121] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 101; Gleadle, 'Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, 100; Marsh, *Life of William Marsh*, 40.

[122] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism,* 85-6; Donald Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-class London, 1828-1860* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001, first published 1986), 101. For an explanation of these ideas see: Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, 77-80; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, Chapter 3 and Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness*, Chapter 4.

[123] Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Eschatology',182, 192-3.

Protestantism.[124] Davidoff and Hall described her 'exaggerated admiration for her father' as the result of 'contradictory feelings about the limits of her sphere', but as this section will show, an older Catherine would develop a remarkable self-confidence in respect of her own religious opinions and agency.[125]

The Anglican Church, unlike the Nonconformist sects discussed above, offered women no formal role, other than that of patron for the endowment of churches or ministers' livings, which required wealth.[126] Women were expected to lead private devotional lives and could beautify and clean churches, but no female devotional institutions had survived the Reformation.[127] Female religious orders were reintroduced in 1841 by the Oxford Movement, but their Anglo-Catholic tone was unacceptable to ultra-Protestant women.[128] The establishment of a diaconate for

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[124] L. E. O'Rorke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh* (London: Longmans, Green, 1918), 55.

[125] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 125.

[126] For examples of patrons see: Phillada Ballard, 'Ryland, Louisa Anne (1814-1889)', *ODNB*, OUP; http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/103438; accessed Sept 2013; Eryn White, 'Women, Work and Worship in the Trefeca Family 1752-1773', in *Religion, Gender, and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting*, edited by Geordan Hammond and Peter Forsaith (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 110.

[127] Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London: Routledge, 1993), 56.

[128] Carmen Mangion, 'Women, Religious Ministry and Female Institution Building', *in Women, Gender and Religious Cultures,* 75, 81-5,

women in 1861 offered only limited professional roles as curates. Many female deacons were channelled into programmes of nursing, education and philanthropy, which offered little more scope, and often less autonomy, than voluntary work.[129] Gregory has shown that woman from clerical families, though involved in parish work, rarely received official recognition.[130] They did, however, successfully blur the distinction between public and private spaces by reaching out from the rectory to the parish, and some, like Marsh, harnessed their religious, social and political interests to expand significantly their sphere of influence.

Background

Catherine Marsh spent over thirty years living in the Midlands: in Birmingham, Leamington and later in Shropshire. Her family background, unlike those of Darby and Smith, was clerical and professional rather than commercial or industrial. The Marsh family moved in upper middle-class and aristocratic circles that consisted chiefly of fellow evangelical Tories; Catherine's godfather, for example, was Charles Simeon, an influential evangelical theologian and the founder of the Simeon Trust, which purchased Anglican incumbencies to install Evangelicals in Anglican livings. In 1829 William Marsh was made rector of St Thomas's, Birmingham, one of three new Midland churches controlled by Evangelical

[129] Mangion, 'Women, Religious Ministry and Female Institution Building', 77-8, 83-5; Catherine Prelinger, 'The Female Diaconate in the Anglican Church: What Kind of Ministry for Women', in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*, edited by Gail Malmgreen (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1986), 166-173, 178-88.

[130] Gregory, 'Gender and the Clerical Profession', 260-66.

Trustees.[131] Although the family lived in the exclusive suburb of Edgbaston, Catherine was soon introduced to evangelical and philanthropic work in the impoverished parish, running her first Sunday school class at the age of eleven and assisting her mother with the organisation of clothing and coal clubs and sick visiting.[132]

Following her mother's death in 1833 Catherine took over her many parish duties. Troubled by cataracts, William Marsh accepted Simeon's offer of a new church, St Mary's, Leamington in 1839. Having been educated at home, at Leamington Catherine acted as her father's amanuensis; their relationship seems to have been close and probably influenced her thinking. Catherine's urgency to 'save souls', for example, stemmed from her belief in pre-millenialism, something she shared with her father.[133] The exclusivity of the father / daughter relationship, however, should not be exaggerated. William Marsh remarried twice, in 1840 and 1848, and Catherine, who had remained single to care for him, expressed her loss to her friend Caroline Maitland following the third marriage: 'My mercies are great but I feel a very lone woman'.[134] Perhaps as a result of this, Marsh busied herself with evangelicalism, running weekly cottage meetings for elderly women, undertaking hospital mission work, taking over the charity school founded by her friend Adele

[131] O'Rorke, *Life,* 8; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 83-5.

[132] O'Rorke, *Life,* 8; Marsh*, Life of William Marsh*, 148.

[133] O'Rorke, *Life,* 26, 36.

[134] Marsh to Maitland, 1 August 1849, in O'Rorke, *Life* 67.

Galton and holding confirmation classes.[135] In 1850, William Marsh retired and moved with his wife and Catherine to Beckenham Rectory, Kent, to live with Catherine's sister Matilda and her husband, the Rev. Frederick Chalmers. Here, the experience in evangelising gained in Birmingham and Leamington would become invaluable for Marsh's ministry among several hundred navvies who were billeted near her home.[136]

Religious politics and ministry

Marsh's life, like that of Abiah Darby's years earlier, in many ways followed the pattern of a well-connected, affluent middle-class woman: she enjoyed travel and reading and was deeply interested in politics; summers were spent in Italy and Switzerland or in Scotland and Ireland in the company of friends. Nevertheless, her identity was rooted in her religious agency. She remained alert to those in spiritual distress, and her letters record frequent examples of being asked for guidance. Hers was a positive religion; there was little sign of the spiritual introspection, despondency and anguish that Mack describes as characterising much of Nonconformist evangelicalism, and which can be found in the writing of both Darby and Smith.[137] Politics and religion, bound up as they were with notions of national and Protestant identity, Toryism and themes of privilege, class, and paternalistic benevolence were inseparable for Marsh. Such layers of belief could

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[135] Ibid., 67, 72. Adele was Elizabeth Wheler's sister (Chapter 4 of this thesis) and their father Samuel Galton was the estranged brother of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck (Chapters 1 and 5 and Appendix 3).

[136] Marsh, *Life of William Marsh,* 73, 85.

[137] Mack, *Visionary Women,* 354-356; Mack, *Heart Religion,* 12-18.

be advantageous. As Gleadle demonstrates in her profile of Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, 'status, wealth or religious identity were often privileged over gendered characteristics in the contemporary conceptualization of female publicity'.[138] Marsh was a resourceful woman whose evangelical agency drew her into political activity, but access was also ensured by her status as the daughter of a prominent Anglican and the influence of well-connected friends, enabling her to adopt a more overtly political stance than Darby or Smith.[139]

During the heated 1845 debates on the government grant to the Catholic Maynooth seminary, for instance, Marsh canvassed influential family friends like Lord Stanley of Alderley and Lord Carnwath to resist the proposal. Her campaigning was lifelong and included interventions in the 1846 election, the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1868 and, much later, the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill in 1892.[140] This last found Marsh writing protest letters to the *Record*, under the name 'Credo', while a letter to Gladstone in 1893 reminded him that she had prayed for him for twenty-seven years and, prophetically, that she could not bear that his name should 'have the stain of causing bloodshed upon it - and the horror of Civil War'.[141] Marsh would occasionally make strategic use of deferential language when addressing significant public figures, in order to

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[138] Gleadle, 'Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna', 101.

[139] Major, *Madam Britannia,* 240-41.

[140] O'Rorke, *Life,* 47-8, 55, 247-48, 309-11; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 102.

[141] Marsh, letters to the *Record* signed 'Credo', quoted in O'Rorke, *Life,* 331-2; Marsh to W.E. Gladstone, 18 February 1893, quoted in O'Rorke, *Life*, 337.

make her opinions known.[142] However, she believed in her patriotic right to use her voice, a belief which never wavered and which was born of her social class, her religious agency and her later success as an author.

The mainspring of Catherine Marsh's ministry was her preaching, or as she preferred to call it, 'addressing' or 'speaking', not only to large gatherings, but in private talks with individuals. She developed an 'intensely sympathetic and winning manner' as a teacher and listener, becoming a persuasive preacher.[143] This included, in 1853, evangelising some of the three thousand navvies working around Beckenham on the re-erection of the Crystal Palace. She published their experiences in *English Hearts and English Hands* in 1857, and the popularity of the book made her a household name and inspired others to take up similar evangelical and philanthropic work.[144] Marsh was always discreet when preaching; she remained seated and did not speak in the presence of clergymen, a feminine modesty that proved a useful strategy against controversy as her ministry widened.[145] Friendship networks played an important role in this: friends she

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[142] Such strategies are also explored in Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender, and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 257-59; Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 3-4.

[143] Lady Victoria Buxton, "In Memoriam" in *Time and Talents*, April 1913, quoted in O'Rorke, *Life,* 149-50.

[144] Marsh, *English Hearts and English Hands* (London: Nisbett, 1858, first published 1857).

[145] O'Rorke, *Life*, 183; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 125.

visited while on holiday often arranged for her to preach to workers and prisoners in their locality. *En route* to Scotland in 1858 she addressed over seven hundred prisoners at Preston Gaol over two days, presenting each prisoner with a copy of a soldier's prayer she had written and presented to the navvies of Beckenham before they left for the Crimea. She then retired to her host's home, Worden Hall, and that evening addressed the assembled guests. The next visit was to strangers, the Dawsons of Aldcliffe Hall, who, having read *English Hearts*, had formed Bible classes for artisans and asked her to address the men. The following day she addressed two hundred workers at a silk mill.[146]

This evangelical 'progress' shows how overlapping private and public spaces could be, and the complex ways in which women could identify with different communities beyond their own immediate family environment, as Rendall and Klein and have shown. Also important was her own status, which increasingly eased her way into institutional settings.[147] Marsh had become a Victorian celebrity but was vigilant on social protocol; her insistence on not referring to her work as 'preaching', together with her status, protected her from challenges. Probably for the same reason, as Anderson observes, she kept her distance from the female preaching 'circuit', mindful of the need to stay within the letter, if not the spirit, of the convention against female preaching for the sake of her family's clerical reputation.[148] In 1865, for example, she addressed 800 people at Madras

[146] O'Rorke, *Life,*162-64; for 'The Soldier's Prayer' see 98-9.

[147] Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', 482-3; Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction', 103-05, Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 18.

[148] Anderson, 'Women Preachers', 468-69.

College, St Andrews. Dr Boyd, the principal, wrote: 'That most admirable woman disclaims the idea of anything like preaching … for pathos, and interest, and deep impressiveness, I never heard a finer speaker'.[149] She also took services, which she called family prayers, at large gatherings in the homes of the Scottish and Irish Protestant peers with whom she spent summer holidays. In 1879 she was asked to assist D. L. Moody, the American evangelist, with his Cambridge mission; many undergraduates and over 3,000 townspeople attended meetings. Marsh later had tea with the women of Girton College.[150]

No opportunity could be missed to fulfil her religious agency to evangelise. Marsh had long been interested in converting the young, especially soldiers, since befriending Captain Hedley Vicars in 1853. When he was killed in the Crimea the *Memorials* she wrote of him brought her many letters from soldiers.[151] In January 1857 Marsh began a ministry to cadets at Addiscombe, the Military College of the East India Company. The work might be seen as a consolation, not only for the loss of Vicars, but also of Sir Henry Lawrence, a cousin killed during the Indian Mutiny. Her disappointment at not being accepted as one of Nightingale's Crimea nurses in 1854 perhaps also channelled her energies towards young men trapped in institutions devoid of a spiritual life.[152] Marsh's biographer commented that the

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[149] O'Rorke, *Life,* 225.

[150] O'Rorke, *Life*, 288-9.

[151] Catherine Marsh, *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars, Ninety-Seventh Regiment* (London: Nisbett, 1857, first published 1855).

[152] O'Rorke*, Life,* 143-45; 111.

cadets saw her as a ‘Mother-in-Israel’, and many kept in touch long afterwards.[153] Her voluminous correspondence formed the basis of her imagined community, a form of surrogate family which she nurtured with her replies, sometimes receiving fifty letters a day.[154]

Writing

Marsh first seems to have been inspired to publish in 1852, when she converted a dying man, Dr G. R. Reeve, to evangelicalism. The account of Reeve’s death-bed conversion, *The Victory Won,* published in 1854, reached eighteen editions by 1862. Evangelicals perpetuated the idea of a ‘good death’ and the popularity of death-bed scenes in Victorian literature testifies to public interest in them.[155] This was the first of over fifty titles Marsh published on evangelical themes. Some, but not all, were short, affordable pocket editions intended to evangelise the working classes. She employed a clever marketing strategy, not to make money, but to spread her evangelical ministry as widely as possible. Purchasing thousands of copies herself, she donated them to prisons, orphanages, factories and barracks along with printed prayers and tracts. When Marsh published *English Hearts*, based on the navvies’ personal accounts of their conversion, her authorial intent was to persuade the upper classes to show more understanding towards the

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[153] Ibid., 204. The term Mother-in-Israel was used by Protestants to define women who nurtured the faithful materially and spiritually; see: Mack, *Visionary Women*, 218, 287.

[154] O’Rorke*, Life,* 204, 328.

[155] See for example, the death of Little Nell in Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841).

working classes. Whatever the success of this aim, her writing was undoubtedly influential, inspiring many to emulate her, including Ellen Ranyard and Julia Wightman, later leading philanthropists.[156]

In 1853 Marsh met Captain Hedley Vicars, the younger brother of her friend, Lady Rayleigh, and helped him to regain his faith at a time when the evangelical movement was attempting to evangelise the army. William Marsh, President of the Soldier's Friend Society, made statements of 'unabashed militarism', but Lewis suggests that the greatest impact on the British public was the *Memorial of Captain Hedley Vicars* which Catherine Marsh wrote following Vicars' death in March 1855.[157] Vicars had embarked for the Crimea in May 1854 and between duties, ministered to sick and dying soldiers. Catherine Marsh supplied Vicars with tracts, prayer cards and Testaments as he drew other officers and men into mission work in the camps and hospitals of Scutari.[158] She wrote to John Sumner, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a friend, asking him to request Parliament for a fast day of national prayer; it finally went ahead on 21 March 1855.[159] Hedley Vicars and his fellow officers kept the fast day, holding services for the men in camp. The following night Vicars received a fatal wound. His death provoked an outpouring of

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[156] O'Rorke, *Life, 226;* Barrow, Margaret. 2006 "Wightman [née James], Julia Bainbrigge (1817–1898), temperance activist and author." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-39165; accessed 13 Dec. 2018.

[157] Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness*, 212-14; Marsh, *Vicars.*

[158] Marsh, *Vicars, 85, 142-3.*

[159] O'Rorke, *Life,* 117.

grief from the soldiers who knew him, including many of the navvies from Beckenham.[160]

At the request of Vicars' family, Marsh published the *Memorials* in December 1855. A combination of evangelical doctrine and military heroism, the book had a remarkable impact, selling 70,000 copies in the first year. It not only fulfilled its evangelical purpose as a readable, contemporary spiritual biography with a wide appeal, but it also became, as Anderson argues, 'a classic text-book of the religious war party'. Lord Panmure asserted that Marsh's biography had convinced the British nation that 'a man need not be a bad soldier because he is a good Christian'.[161] The main consequence was that the government instituted a professional chaplaincy for the army, but there is an irony in Marsh's success; the government did not stop at creating an Anglican Protestant army as the ultra-Protestants, including the Marsh family, had hoped, but extended the chaplaincy to include Catholics. Catherine Marsh, in her representation of one man's Crimean War, had initiated the Christianization, not the Protestantization, of the British Army, and it was accomplished within a decade.[162] Although Margaret Oliphant criticised the book's lack of literary merit in her review for *Blackwood's* in 1858, she acknowledged its undeniable popularity, with sales outstripping works by

[160] See: Marsh, 'Appendix' in *Vicars,* 167 onwards.

[161] Olive Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *The English Historical Review* 86, no. 338 (1971): 48-9; Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness*, 214-15.

[162] Anderson, 'Christian Militarism', 61, 72.

Thackeray and Dickens, albeit expanded by Marsh's purse.[163] Trev Broughton and Anderson agree that this book was one of the most influential responses to the Crimean War and changed the public attitude towards troops, who suddenly became 'the people's army'.[164] Marsh's books were an intrinsic part of her evangelical ministry. She donated them by the thousand in England and to both sides of the Franco-Prussian war and the American civil war.[165] Her writing not only informed her ministry, it became an essential part of her ministry.

Although excluded from a formal role in the Church of England, Marsh developed a powerful ministry. She used her abilities as a persuasive preacher and talented writer, as well as her social contacts, status and wealth, to develop and extend her evangelical mission, gaining a personal authority that opened doors at the highest level into the otherwise closed world of masculine institutional life. It was Marsh's social and religious interests, rather than her gender, that were most significant in her development as an ultra-Protestant and committed evangelical who captured the public mood. As Scott has shown, women like Marsh found gaps between tradition and reform, and between propriety and innovation, in which to develop their identities, and Gleadle has argued that where women operated in areas

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[163] Margaret Oliphant, 'Religious Memoirs', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 83, (June 1858): 704.

[164] Trev Broughton, 'The Lives and Afterlives of Captain Hedley Vicars: Evangelical Biography and the Crimean War', *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 20, (2015):1; Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism', 48.

[165] During the Franco-Prussian war 25,025 French and 25,025 German translated copies were issued: O'Rorke, *Life*, 250.

where their status, rather than their gender, was ascendant, they often capitalized on opportunities.[166] Marsh thus forged a religious identity for herself which was acknowledged by men of authority. Archbishop Randall Davidson, for example, called her the 'veteran pioneer of women's evangelistic forces in the England of today'.[167] He may have viewed her religious agency in purely feminine terms and indeed, Anglicanism did not officially recognise the work of women like Marsh. However, barracks and prison governors, the epitome of the masculinity of Victorian institutional life, invited her to board their flagships, recognising the authority of her religious voice. At least in part by entering the harshest of society's institutions, Catherine Marsh negotiated for herself an identity as a powerful female Anglican minister at a time when such roles did not exist.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that between the 1750s and 1870s it was possible for women, through their own agency, to develop strong religious identities as women preachers. The three denominations examined offered the women opportunities to create ministries, informally in the case of the Church of England, and within disciplinary limits in the Society of Friends and the Primitive Methodists. However, all three women created much larger spaces in which to operate, extending their evangelical reach beyond expectations. This they accomplished by cultivating,

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[166] Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 17-18; Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 266-67.

[167] O'Rorke, *Life,* 388.

supporting and drawing support themselves from extensive networks; these were not only religious and pastoral, but also included political, commercial, publishing, institutional as well as other social, familial and cultural networks. Although the women came from different strata of the middle-class and there were distinctions between denominations, their ministries had significant similarities, perhaps unsurprisingly, given that they were delivering a common evangelical message of repentance and redemption to all. Like male preachers and clerics, they led prayers, preached and taught; Smith administered the sacrament and they all undertook pastoral duties. They did leave legacies; their epistolary networks were of great value in sustaining their converts, whether soldiers in the Crimea or new preachers. In addition, Darby's daughter-in-law Deborah Darby followed her example, preaching in America for three years; Smith developed a web of Primitive Methodist women which continued her work, and Marsh left a wave of evangelical campaigners in her wake.

The tensions arising from denominational differences and attendant religious legislation made these women political as well as religious agents. Darby challenged the Bishop of Hereford, 'a Prince of the Church', by preaching in his city, and paid fines rather than tithes; Smith engaged in debate with Anglican clerics who publicly contested her ministry, and risked arrest or assault by preaching in hostile villages and towns, while Marsh wrote to the press and lobbied politicians, including Gladstone, urging political action in the interests of ultra-Protestants and the working poor. Central to their success was the way in which they occupied the overlapping spaces between the public and the private: Darby and Marsh capitalized on existing religious and social networks to ease their access into all-male barrack-yards and onto navy ships, and Smith used her status

as an educated woman to persuade antagonistic clerics that she had the right to preach in public spaces.

The women all received recognition for their work. Smith was publicly acknowledged by the Connexion as a brave and persuasive preacher and her memoir was published in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* to encourage others. Darby was acknowledged by mayors and other local officials as someone who helped to improve behaviour in their towns, and prison governors and naval captains invited Marsh to meet their charges, recognising the power of her simple evangelical message. Davidoff and Hall suggest that women employed religion as 'a vital individual space, a place for self-fulfilment', but this chapter has extended that argument, showing that these women went further, employing their individual religious agency, status and even demeanour to further their religious cause.[168] They may have had some personal ambition, as Davidoff and Hall suggest, if only to contribute to the evangelical message of manners and morals, but Marsh, for example, did not use religion to create an identity for herself as a best-selling author; rather, she used her identity as a best-selling author in the cause of religion. Their ambition seems to have focused on the mission to evangelize. These women were not exceptional in their class but were exceptional in their religious agency.

[168] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 136.

Chapter 3: Philanthropy

Introduction

The nineteenth century witnessed a phenomenal growth in charitable activity, giving rise to what D.W. Bebbington describes as 'an empire of philanthropy', an empire which was to add a new dimension to many women's lives for the rest of the century.[1] Developments in philanthropic thinking, especially by Anglican evangelicals from the 1780s resulted, by the early nineteenth century, in the appearance of a more organised, often centralised, voluntary sector made up of individual associations, although personal benevolence, which took many forms, still

[1] D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995, first published 1989), 71. See also: Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP), 2006); Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (London: Harvard University Press (hereafter HUP), 1964); For a review of religion in the period see: James Obelkevich, 'Religion', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950,* edited by F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP), 1996, first published 1990); Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2009).

continued.[2] Louisa Anne Ryland (1814-1889) of Birmingham, later Barford Hill, near Leamington, Warwickshire, for instance, in recognition of the wealth Birmingham's development had brought to her family, endowed and paid for the building of churches, hospitals and schools and gifted urban parks in the Midlands.[3] Some sponsored their own small school, as did the Galtons (Chapter 4), and evangelicalism generated enthusiasm among the middle-class for philanthropic voluntary associations. Following the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society (known also as the BFBS or the Bible Society) in 1804, with a central committee in London overseeing district branches nationwide, many associations adopted its successful model constitution.[4] Most, but not all, philanthropic associations remained religious in character initially, either denominational or more broadly evangelical, and it was through churches and chapels that women were often recruited as volunteers. Middle-class women were a potent force behind

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[2] See: Wolffe, John. 2005 "Clapham Sect (act. 1792–1815)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB);* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-42140; accessed 21 Aug. 2018.

[3] Phillada Ballard, 'Ryland, Louisa Anne (1814-1889)', *ODNB*, OUP; http://www.oxforddnb.com.view/article/103438; accessed Sept. 2013.

[4] For a comprehensive history of the Bible Society and its influence see: Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society,* (Cambridge: CUP,1991). For associational life see: R. J. Morris, 'Clubs, Societies and Associations', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950, vol. 3.*

philanthropy, providing hours of voluntary work, raising funds and distributing charity, making progress possible on a large scale. Philanthropy was part of the lives of several of the women examined in this thesis. For example, the Wedgwood sisters Sarah and Kitty, and Elizabeth Wheler ran charity schools (Chapters 1 and 4), Abiah Darby was a prison visitor and instigated Sunday School provision in Coalbrookdale (Chapter 2), and Susanna Watts campaigned against slavery and animal cruelty (Chapter 5). For women, volunteering offered not only a charitable activity, but also a form of independent public life, female friendships and a widening social circle. Even those with modest disposable income could contribute as volunteers and organisers, as did Elizabeth Wheler (Chapter 4). This chapter explores the participation of three provincial, middle-class women of the Midlands in associational philanthropy between 1820 and 1860, the last forty years of the century covered by the thesis. This period was important because although voluntary associations were created for many different purposes such as education, leisure, and sport, there was also an increase in philanthropic activity which employed pressure politics, particularly by female anti-slavery associations, the first, and one of the most successful of which, the Female Society for Birmingham, was founded by two of the women examined here. For contrast, the experiences of the third woman show the kind of voluntary activities a less independent woman might undertake. The chapter assesses the influence family and friendship networks had on women's philanthropic engagement, and the impact that had on their sense of identity.

The women who are the focus of this chapter saw philanthropy as central to their identities. They lived between 1781 and 1891 and were active between the 1790s and the 1860s. The first section explores philanthropy in the context of female

friendships. Mary Lloyd (1795-1865) (neé Honeychurch) and Lucy Townsend (1781-1847) were friends who worked together as volunteers for the Bible Society. This non-denominational society, the biggest and wealthiest of the early voluntary associations, offered many women their first experience of associational missionary philanthropy.[5] Quaker Mary Lloyd originated from Falmouth in Cornwall and came to the Midlands following marriage in 1823 to Samuel Lloyd (1795-1862), a member of the extensive Quaker family of iron masters and bankers. The Lloyds lived in Wednesbury, beginning their early philanthropy in their own neighbourhood.[6] Lucy Townsend, an evangelical Anglican, lived in nearby West Bromwich, where her husband, Charles Townsend (1780-1865) was a perpetual curate.[7] The Lloyds and Townsends, men as well as women, engaged in philanthropy enthusiastically, and

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[5] See: Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*.

[6] Midgley, Clare. 2013 "Lloyd [née Honeychurch], Mary (1795–1865), slavery abolitionist." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-50718; accessed 14 Aug. 2018.

For information on the extensive reach of Quaker clans generally and the Lloyd clan see: James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: Murray, 1997), 71, 88,101; see: Appendix 3 of this thesis showing a chart of networks.

[7] Midgley, Clare. 2004 "Townsend [née Jesse], Lucy (1781–1847), slavery abolitionist." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-50717; 28 Aug. 2018.

perhaps encouraged by the organisational experience gained in the Bible Society the two women co-founded Britain's first independent women's anti-slavery society in 1825.

In the second section, philanthropy is examined in the context of family relationships. Rebecca Kenrick (1799-1891) was the daughter of Archibald Kenrick (1760-1835), who ran a prosperous family business manufacturing cast-iron and tinned holloware in West Bromwich, Staffordshire where the family, active Unitarians, also lived. Rebecca, as the unmarried daughter, helped her father with his charity schools and other charitable associations from the 1830s. This chapter is based on published and unpublished memoirs, a diary and correspondence, in addition to the collected records and accounts of the Birmingham female anti-slavery society. Originally entitled the Ladies Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves it was later renamed, and will be referred to here as, the Female Society for Birmingham (FSB). This chapter examines the influence of friendship and family interests on the direction of women's philanthropic activity and questions the extent to which women could shape their own philanthropic roles and identities, arguing that philanthropic involvement should be seen in the context of family and other relationships.

Context

Although already in existence the previous century, philanthropy in the shape of associational voluntary activities expanded rapidly in Britain from the early 1800s. This, alongside evangelicalism, was intended to counter what was perceived as mounting spiritual and physical poverty mainly, but not exclusively, in urban areas.[8]

[8] Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 23-5.

The scale of this expansion was driven in part by social anxiety flowing from the French Revolution of 1789 and the demographic consequences of industrial expansion.[9] David Owen concludes that philanthropy was 'a valid expression of the social temper of the nineteenth century' which, for all its weaknesses, 'was a humanitarian age'.[10] As chapter 2 has shown, the aim of the evangelical religious revival which began in the 1790s, instigated largely by the conservative Anglican group known as the Clapham Sect, was the reformation of moral and spiritual manners.[11] Aimed initially at the ruling classes and the Anglican Church, the failure to make much impression there turned the movement's attention to the middle classes, where evangelicalism was embraced more enthusiastically. There began an ambitious programme of philanthropy and religious education for the labouring poor through the creation of voluntary associations based largely on district visiting. This philosophy was articulated by William Wilberforce in his book, *A Practical View*, which Prochaska suggests was 'after the Bible perhaps the most influential book of its day'. Wilberforce argued that women were more predisposed to religion and charitable works than men, and the opportunity to undertake such work was not

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[9] M.J.D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787-1886* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008, first published 2004),61-80.

[10] Owen, *English Philanthropy,* 164.

[11] See: Wolffe, "Clapham Sect (act. 1792–1815)." *ODNB;* Roberts, *Making English Morals*; Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*; Wolffe, John. 2004 "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1001321; 21 Aug. 2018.

ignored by middle-class women who volunteered in large numbers.[12] Hannah More, a friend of Wilberforce and a successful playwright turned evangelical writer, produced Cheap Repository Tracts between 1794 and 1798. These moral tales, welcomed by evangelists but not by everyone, were aimed at the labouring class, showing how they could achieve a respectable life and a stake in society.[13]

In considering the circumstances behind the rise in philanthropy in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century, Prochaska reminds us that the poor relief system offered scant provision for the poor; charitable revenues in mid-Victorian years 'far exceeded gross expenditure on poor relief in England and Wales'.[14] Opinion was divided about the level of intervention. In charitable educational provision, for example, both the Earl of Shaftesbury and William Gladstone among others resisted state intervention in the 1850s, concerned for the viability of religious

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[12] Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 9-13. William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country contrasted with real Christianity* (London: Johnstone Hunter, 1797), 434.

[13] Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford: OUP, 2004, first published 2003), 169-190; Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, first published 2000), 21-5; see also: S. Pederson, 'Hannah More meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth- Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 25, no.1 (1986).

[14] Frank Prochaska, *Disinherited Spirit,* 14, 46-60, 148; Roberts, *Making English Morals*, 98-100.

authority and influence in schools; many voluntarists also resisted, suspicious of 'anything but an enabling state' and self-help was promoted in popular literature by writers like Samuel Smiles.[15] José Harris argues that the relationship between the government and society was immensely complex and continually evolving before the mid-twentieth century, with public spending noticeably low. Even in the 1900s public authorities, Harris argues, spent less than 8 per cent of the gross domestic product, compared to 50 per cent by the 1960s.[16] There was also a contrasting public debate, often conducted through the press, about the efficacy of philanthropy, with some fearing that it reduced incentives to the poor to rise above poverty, usually on the assumption that poverty was self-inflicted.[17]

Large numbers of middle-class women became district visitors for associations in poor districts under conditions which many might think unpleasant at best, and dangerous at worst, and which could leave women open to accusations of unfeminine behaviour. Such women were often motivated by their serious Christianity; philanthropic work was therefore conceptualized by evangelicals like Wilberforce as an extension of the religious duty of women as expressed through

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[15] Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: Murray, 1859). For government policies on intervention see: Pat Thane, 'Government and Society in England and Wales, 1750-1914', in *Cambridge Social History of Britain, vol.3*; Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). see also Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*.

[16] José Harris, 'Society and the State in Twentieth-Century Britain', in *Cambridge Social History of Britain*, 3:64.

[17] Roberts, *Making English Morals*, 98-9.

their characteristics of caring and nurturing, gendered as feminine.[18] Alternatively, for those with little religious enthusiasm, philanthropy may have offered a sense of moral fulfilment, and yet others might have employed philanthropy to acquire status in their community. In the period of this chapter, and for this generation, philanthropic work became a signifier of the status of middle-class women, as well as an opportunity to operate outside the domestic arena**.** Leslie Howsam, however, suggests that philanthropy was far more than an escape from routine domesticity; it was, rather, a 'patch of territory in church or community where women could carve out for themselves a project in which they could work relatively unhindered'. Davidoff and Hall call it 'A vital individual space, a place for self-fulfilment', but add that this opportunity was offered without 'aligning that place with positions of public responsibility'. This last view, however, is not entirely supported by the evidence, which shows women increasingly creating and running autonomous voluntary associations.[19] Of course, as Simon Morgan has shown, some women did become discouraged with philanthropy, especially in fast-growing industrial towns, which

[18] See: Wilberforce, *A Practical View.*

[19] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 59; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1987), 136; Prochaska dates the first viable female society, the 'Lying-in Charity' of Tottenham, at 1791: Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 101. See also: Peter Gordon and David Doughan, *Dictionary of British Women's Organisations 1825-1960* (London: Routledge, 2013, first published 2002).

perhaps had underdeveloped traditions of visiting in the poorest areas.[20] This chapter focuses on three women to consider how and why they negotiated ways in which to operate in the world of philanthropy, beginning with Lucy Townsend and Mary Lloyd.

Lucy Townsend (1781-1847) (née Jesse), and Mary Lloyd (1795-1865) (née Honeychurch)

Lucy Townsend and Mary Lloyd became good friends through their shared work for the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). Little is known about the youth and childhood of Lucy Townsend (née Jesse), other than that she was the daughter of Anglican cleric William Jesse of West Bromwich, and that, as her daughter Charlotte recounted in her own anti-slavery pamphlet, 'when my mother was a little girl, she went without any sugar at all, rather than partake of the sin of slavery'.[21] Probably through her parents' influence, Lucy had joined in the first sugar boycott, sometime in the 1780s and 1790s, when families were encouraged by abolition campaigners to abstain from West Indian sugar products, a project in which Mary Lloyd's mother-in-law had also played a part.[22]

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[20] Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris, 2007), 80.

[21] Charlotte Townsend, *Pity the Negro; or An Address to Children on the Subject of Slavery*, 7th edn. (London: Westley and Davis, 1829), quoted in Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 61.

[22] Clare Midgley*, Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870 (*London: Routledge, 2004, first published 1992*),* 73, 70; Moira Ferguson, *Subject*

In 1807 Lucy married a fellow evangelical and anti-slavery campaigner, the Revd Charles Townsend (1780-1865), perpetual curate of West Bromwich. They had at least six children, one of whom, Charlotte, also campaigned against slavery, influenced possibly by her parents' active philanthropy. Like many clerical wives, Lucy Townsend supported her husband's philanthropic work, including campaigns to abolish cruel sports, but also joined the BFBS with her friend Mary Lloyd from 1824 on her own account, and became involved in the West Bromwich Dorcas society, where she met Rebecca Kenrick, the subject of the following section. Many women in this period gained their first experience of voluntary associations through the BFBS; this non-denominational association raised funds to send Bibles abroad and later, at the behest of their volunteers, to sell cheap Bibles to the English and Welsh poor. The use of regional and local auxiliary associations, with volunteer district visitors to spread the BFBS message and raise funds, proved to be a masterstroke. [23]

Townsend and Lloyd worked together enthusiastically for the BFBS, and Lloyd's daughter Sarah Sturge records that they were 'making bags to sell on behalf of the Bible society, when Mrs Townsend exclaimed, "How I wish we could do something of this sort to obtain money for the poor slaves". This led to much thought'.[24] Both women were fully supported by their husbands, who were members of the men's

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to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, first published 1992), 259-60.

[23] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles,* 39-42, 45.

[24] Sara Sturge, *Memoir of Mary Lloyd of Wednesbury*, *1795-1865* (Printed for Private Circulation, 1921), 30.

auxiliary, Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society formed in 1823. The first meeting of Townsend and Lloyd's female anti-slavery society was held in the Townsend home on 8 April 1825.[25]

More is known about Mary Lloyd. She was born to Quaker parents in 1795 in Falmouth, Cornwall. Mary's mother, a recognised Quaker minister, died in 1803 when Mary was eight. Orphaned by 1818, Mary moved between relatives. While staying with her sister in Birmingham she met the Lloyd family of Sparkbrook, Birmingham, becoming a close friend of Samuel (known as 'Quaker Lloyd') and Rachel Lloyd, and their family of ten children, and in 1823 married their son, Samuel.[26] The Lloyds were iron masters, colliery owners and members of a prominent Quaker industrial and banking family; Samuel junior was head of Lloyds, Foster & Co., Wednesbury, a company which produced bar iron for nail-making and mined coal and iron ore.[27] The couple, both committed Quakers, lived near the business in Wood Green, Wednesbury, attending the Birmingham Quaker Meeting nine miles away twice weekly, and the Annual Meeting in London.[28] Distressed by the poverty in Wednesbury and, as their daughter Sarah recorded, 'dismayed by the roughness and ignorance of the people, they took philanthropic measures in the area.'[29] Beginning in 1824, Lloyd's husband ended local bull-baiting and opened a

[25] Midgley, *Women against Slavery,* 43-7.

[26] Sturge, *Memoir*, 27-8.

[27] Humphrey Lloyd, *The Quaker Lloyds in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 255.

[28] Sturge, Memoir, 28.

[29] Ibid., 33.

British School, engaging a teacher. Mary set up clubs for the local women: a Provident Society to encourage saving, a Benevolent Society to assist poor mothers with baby clothes and sheets for lying-in and, to replenish these items, a Dorcas Society where tradesmen's wives were invited monthly to a tea-party at the local Institute, where they sewed replacement linen and baby clothes for distribution to impoverished pregnant women.[30] All of these Lloyd supervised herself and also made house-to-house visits to the poor.

Joint Venture

During her house calls, Lloyd 'discovered the large number of deaf and dumb children, who were entirely neglected'. To be eligible to enter The Birmingham Institution for Deaf Children pupils needed to be elected by subscribers and pay £6 a year towards expenses. Knowing this was beyond the reach of most working families, Lloyd and Townsend decided to found The Juvenile Association in Aid of Uninstructed Deaf Mutes in 1834, a fund-raising society to which children of the better-off paid weekly subscriptions towards the costs of educating deaf-mute children.[31] Prochaska observes that juvenile societies, starting from 1804, 'raised millions of pounds' for charitable ends. Pious mothers encouraged it, seeing it as a practical way to encourage religion and compassion in their children.[32] Lloyd certainly expected her own children to assist in the family's growing programme of philanthropy. Her daughter, Sara Sturge, recorded that, as children, the girls of the

[30] Sturge, *Memoir*, 27-8, 33-4; Midgley, Clare. 2013 "Lloyd [née Honeychurch], Mary (1795–1865), slavery abolitionist." *ODNB;* 14 Aug. 2018.

[31] Sturge, *Memoir*, 34-5.

[32] Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 74-77.

family taught ‘some 30 to 40 pit girls every Monday evening for some years’ in the large cellar below the dining room. The pit-girls were taught to read, write, and to sew material previously cut out by the Lloyd girls. Sturge wrote with some feeling: ‘It was a long business getting ready for this night school’.[33]

It could be argued that through their activities Townsend and Lloyd were operating within the sanction of ‘women’s mission’ and were not at risk of social disapproval or physical danger. However, the challenges should not be underestimated. Female philanthropists in West Bromwich and Wednesbury, as elsewhere in industrial areas, were operating in rapidly growing towns with little civic tradition and much lawlessness, where they could put themselves in physical danger. Lloyd’s daughter remarked on the ‘roughness and ignorance’ that prevailed, and Morgan, in his study of women in Leeds, found that: ‘some were concerned at the “public” nature of the work, deeming it immodest. Moreover, although it was often idealized in contemporary literature, there is no doubt that the work could be frustrating, unpleasant, and even downright dangerous’.[34] One of the Leeds visitors spoke of visiting ‘with a faint heart’, and a Mrs Bolton announced she was resigning her district in 1842, recommending that her place should be taken by a man.[35] Clearly, district visitors required courage as well as stamina, and a conviction that they were doing good, yet many women made a serious commitment to this work, as Lloyd and Townsend did. Alison Twells suggests that ‘missionary domesticity … was integral to the construction of middle-class “social selves” and the collective identity

[33] Sturge, *Memoir,* 39.

[34] Morgan, *A Victorian Woman’s Place*, 80.

[35] Ibid.

of the evangelical middle-class'.[36] It is possible therefore, that through visiting and other local philanthropic activities, they found a sense of identity or enhanced status, while seeking to be of practical use to the poor.

Another important motivation for their involvement in philanthropy, and that of other women, was the possibility of forming friendships and networks with other middle-class women. Lloyd's daughter Sara noted that her mother 'was brought into close fellowship with many faithful co-workers … and links were made with a good many who were not … [Quakers]'.[37] This close networking, which grew from and extended beyond their partnership, is best described using the metaphor of the rhizomatic approach, which Kathryn Gleadle has suggested can be fruitfully applied to women's history.[38] The vigorous rhizome root system of some plants multiplies rapidly underground, in a seemingly random way, sending up shoots in often unexpected places. Women cultivated networks in a similar, unobtrusive way: through women's societies, friendships, and influence on, or of, the men of their families, or by making use of the family's cultural capital. Networks spread in multiple directions quietly: through private correspondence, tea table talk, church and social gatherings, and produced, in philanthropy, a critical mass of female influence. Such networks, developed through their earlier philanthropic activities and carefully husbanded by

[36] Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, 113-4.

[37] Sturge, *Memoir,* 32.

[38] Kathryn Gleadle, 'The Imagined Communities of Women's History: Current Debates and Emerging Themes, a Rhizomatic Approach', *Women's History Review* 22, no. 4 (2013): 525.

Townsend and Lloyd, played an essential role in extending the reach of their women's anti-slavery society, formed in 1825.

Anti-slavery

Having conceived the idea of a women's anti-slavery society, Townsend sought advice from veteran anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson sometime between 1824 and 1825. He advised her that 'there are many ladies in different parts of the kingdom who would embark in committees of this sort'.[39] Following this, she and Mary Lloyd held the first meeting of their embryonic female anti-slavery society on 8 April 1825 at the Townsend home. This, Midgley stresses, was the first independent female Anti-slavery society, 'the largest, the most influential and the longest lasting of the associations'. Eventually known as the Female Society for Birmingham, it was formed with Townsend and Lloyd as joint-secretaries, a symbol of their philanthropic partnership, with ten District Treasurers each responsible, with their committees, for their own areas.[40] From the start, Townsend and Lloyd set up a strong network with many contacts stretching across the country. As Midgley argues, 'the existence of ladies' associations considerably increased the number of towns involved in anti-slavery activism; the Female Society for Birmingham played a key role in this process'.[41] The treasurer of the Leicester district was Elizabeth Heyrick; she campaigned and raised funds there with Susanna Watts, discussed in Chapter 5. Although Heyrick is not the subject of this study, her work as an anti-

[39] Thomas Clarkson to Lucy Townsend, date unknown, quoted in Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 47.

[40] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 46.

[41] Ibid., 45.

slavery campaigner having been covered comprehensively by others, it is worth mentioning her contribution to the movement, her work as treasurer for the Leicester branch of the FSB, and crucially, as a leading pamphleteer. Her 1824 pamphlet *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition* marked her out as a political radical.[42]

Townsend, Lloyd and their committee ensured that Heyrick's work was widely disseminated throughout their Society and other societies which they supported. Using their experience in the BFBS, Townsend and Lloyd increased their network to thirteen associations, with contacts in places as diverse as France, Cape Town, and Sierra Leone, probably, Midgley suggests, through denominational networks and the Bible Society network.[43] This spread is confirmed by Louis and Rosamund Billington, who argue that the way in which the FSB had been created enabled the society to function as a national hub, networking with new associations and

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[42] Elizabeth Heyrick, *Immediate not Gradual Abolition* (London: Hatchard, 1824); Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 59. For scholarship on Heyrick see: Clare Midgley, 'The Dissenting Voice of Elizabeth Heyrick: An Exploration of the Links Between Gender, Religious Dissent, and Anti-Slavery Radicalism', in *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery in Britain & America, 1790-1865,* edited by Elizabeth Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey (Oxford: OUP, 2011); Midgley, *Feminism and Empire;* Jennifer Rycenga, 'A Great awakening: Women's Intellect as a Factor in Early Abolitionist Movements, 1824-1834', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21, no. 2 (2005); Ferguson, *Subject to Others;* Kenneth Corfield, 'Elizabeth Heyrick: Radical Quaker' in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*, edited by Gail Malmgreen (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

[43] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery,* 46.

providing them with funds, literature and organisational skills, behaving more like a national body than a local one. Kenneth Corfield argues that the women of Birmingham, Sheffield and Wiltshire 'had adopted a stance that put them … ahead of local male abolitionists and of the nationally-known leaders of the movement'.[44] The rhizomatic effect produced vigorous shoots in the form of an expansion of District Treasurers from ten in 1825 to forty-nine by 1830. Under the leadership of Townsend and Lloyd the networks of their organization were spreading, conveying the anti-slavery propaganda of Heyrick and other authors, arousing public interest, subscriptions, and new societies. Male relatives also used their influence; thanks to Mary Lloyd's husband, who had written to the main men's Anti-Slavery Society, probably as a member of the Birmingham auxiliary committee, advising them of the FSB's success, the London committee were prompted to encourage the formation of other female associations.[45] Some men dissented, including Wilberforce who, disapproving of women publishing and petitioning protested: 'these appear to me proceedings unsuited to the female character as delineated in Scripture', but he was in the minority.[46] Always conscious of elite vested interests in slavery, the men's

[44] Louis and Rosamund Billington, '"A Burning Zeal for Righteousness": Women and the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1820-1860', in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, edited by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 85; Corfield, 'Elizabeth Heyrick', 46-7.

[45] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 47.

[46] Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, editors, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London: John Murray, 1840), 5:264; Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 47-48.

Anti-Slavery Society had settled for gradual abolition at some unspecified future time. However, their bulk-purchase, in 1828, of 1,500 copies of Heyrick's 1828 *Appeal to the Hearts and Consciences of British Women,* signalled that the FSB, guided by Townsend and Lloyd, had become an authoritative voice for abolition.[47]

Sarah Richardson and Kathryn Gleadle, considering the political methods employed by women in the nineteenth century, including those adopted by some involved in the anti-slavery movement, point to the greater scope that could be achieved with a mixture of old and innovative political practices.[48] Older practices included making use of existing patronage or social networks through, for example, the BFBS and Quaker and Anglican communities, whereas newer practices might involve creating pressure groups, which is what the FSB effectively became. It should be noted, however, that a sizeable cohort within the women's societies, including Townsend and Lloyd, although firm in their religious resolve about immediate emancipation, did not call for political agitation. Mary-Anne Rawson of Sheffield, for example, compiled a book of anti-slavery verse and prose, *The Bow in the Cloud* (1834), which, as Ferguson observes, was almost completely, even when polemical, evangelical in tone. Even so, those, like Mary Anne Sherwood, who were concerned that immediate emancipation might lead to revolution in the empire, refused to submit work to the book. Townsend did submit a piece to Rawson, published later,

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[47] Elizabeth Heyrick, *An Appeal to the Hearts and Consciences of British Women* (Leicester: Cockshaw, 1828). Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 59.

[48] Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013*),* 3-4; Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 257-9.

lauding emancipation. ‘The Decision’, a sentimental, spiritual poem asking women to ‘wipe the captive’s tear’, encapsulates her preference for a feminised, evangelical approach to emancipation.[49]

Examples of the use of existing networks include the presence on the committee of the FSB of Sophia Sturge, sister of Joseph Sturge, the radical Birmingham abolitionist, as well as the letter by Samuel Lloyd notifying the Anti-Slavery Society of the success of the FBS, mentioned above. These communication channels were instrumental in moving the men’s society towards the adoption of a campaign for immediate emancipation and show that the secretaries of the FSB were not afraid to canvass the help of men.[50] Jane Rendall has demonstrated how unstable the ‘public sphere’ could be, and how its boundaries could shift, allowing women different access at different times.[51] Although the FSB had little access to power through official channels, it gained entrance through networks of religion and kinship. It seems that mediating the gendered cultural conventions and adopting a strategic mixture of old and new political practices widened the opportunities for the FSB members to engage with, contribute to and, finally, change public policy, an

[49] Mary Anne Rawson, *The Bow in the Cloud; or, the Negro’s Memorial* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1834); Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 267-68.

[50] Alex Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London: Helm, 1987), 50-3.

[51] Jane Rendall, ‘Women and the Public Sphere’, *Gender & History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 482-3.

achievement that Zachary Macaulay foresaw, saying ladies 'seem to form now one main stay of our hopes'.[52]

The use of the iconography of femininity in the campaign masked the radicalism of its activity; especially effective was the employment of a distinctively feminine voice in much of their written material. As Gleadle has observed, this strategy was often adopted by women on first stepping into the political arena in this period.[53] The FSB presented its work not as a challenge to the men but rather as a supportive role, and this was materialised in their substantial financial contributions to the male Association. The primary objective, to give succour to female slaves, also emphasised the feminine nature of the aims and objectives of the society. The FSB's first resolution, written in Mary Lloyd's hand, was uncompromising:

> That we form ourselves into a Society for the amelioration of the condition of the unhappy children of Africa, and especially of Female Negro Slaves, who, living under the British dominion, receive from the British their lot of bitterness.

The reference to 'unhappy children', in its evocation of maternal care, was a reminder that such a cause was an appropriate one for women to take up, and the use of the term 'British dominion' reminded citizens of both sexes of their collective responsibility for slavery. Yet resolution two was almost an apology to the slave-owners:

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[52] Letter from Macaulay to [James Cropper], 16 February 1828, quoted in Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 49.

[53] Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 258.

> That in performance of these efforts of mercy, we abstain as much as possible from needlessly offending the West-India Planters, while we use every proper exertion in aid especially of the Female Negro Slaves.[54]

This was probably as much a concession to the leaders of the Anti-Slavery Association as to the slave-owners. As Ferguson observes, the two secretaries probably compromised with gradualists to gain 'more lasting support'.[55] They also needed to attract the sympathetic support of those women who generally deferred to gendered conventions. Their awareness of the need to work strategically within this paradox was one of the success stories of their membership campaign, ensuring that the society continued to attract a broad base of middle-class female and male supporters who felt justified in signing their petitions. Feminine language and imagery also deflected accusations of 'unwomanly behaviour' and reminded society that care of and for female slaves and their children was a Christian duty for women, a view endorsed by the Anti-Slavery Society in their own appeal to women to support the 'sacred cause' of abolition.[56]

Needlework, in the form of workbags made and sold by members to raise awareness of the abolition campaign, was also an important element of this FSB strategy. It not only provided a positive feminine role for culturally conservative female members, but also reaffirmed the femininity of the movement as a whole. Sara Sturge, Lloyd's second eldest daughter, and the one most engaged, like her

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[54] Resolutions one and two, 'Minutes of the first meeting of the FSB, 8 April 1825', MS 3173/1, BAH; Sturge, *Memoir*, 31.

[55] Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 258.

[56] Billington and Billington, 'A Burning Zeal for Righteousness', 85.

mother, in philanthropy, recorded that the idea of making workbags was adopted from an idea of the BFBS. Over 2,000 workbags were produced by members in the first year.[57] Use was made of slave-free products of cotton, satin and silk. The bags not only raised funds, they became agents of propaganda. Containing anti-slavery literature, including a plan of a slave ship, and copies of Jamaican newspapers describing the outrages against slaves, they were designed to gain the sympathy of middle- and upper-class women for female slaves.[58] They deftly linked the domestic activity of sewing with public campaigning. They also provided an important source of finance for the FSB; the bags cost £800 to make but made a net profit of £1000.[59] This was used to acquire the FSB's propaganda material and to subsidize the men's Anti-Slavery Society. The total percentage of donations the men's society received from women's groups in 1829 represented 21 per cent of donations.[60] Rachel Lloyd (1768-1854), active in the first campaign of 1783 to 1815 and knowing the earlier impact of Wedgwood's cameo depicting an enchained slave, may have discussed the effectiveness of such an icon with daughter-in-law Mary.[61]

As Clive Edwards and Rozika Parker have argued, amateur needlework produced by women had long been symbolic of patriarchal authority, based on gendered

[57] Sturge, *Memoir*, 30; *First Report of FSB*, 6, MS 3173/2, BAH.

[58] The plan was of the brig 'Vigilante': '1828 Album of the FSB', MS 31734/4, BAH.

[59] Sturge, *Memoir*, 31-2.

[60] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 52, 57.

[61] Ibid, 73.

distinctions between art and craft.[62] The workbags functioned in rather more complex ways. Sturge, herself the last secretary of the FSB, described them enthusiastically as 'exquisite bead and satin work bags [which] were made with steel clasps and bead fringes, and on each bag was painted a kneeling slave with his chained hands uplifted, and below were the words: "Am I not a man and a brother?" They were filled with literature and priced at 12/6 each'. However, they were not only the product of feminine artistry. She also commented that when the subject of slavery was eventually put before Parliament by Wilberforce, Clarkson, Burke and others 'they owned that the Cause had been much forwarded by the bead bags, and the work of the Ladies' Negro Friends Society'[FSB].[63] The men had taken the purpose of the bags at face value: as being decorative, feminine complements to their work. But they were also being used as agents for the cause, as their very mention by Parliamentarians showed.

Needlework also gained the FSB access to Princess Victoria, who was presented with a workbag by Elizabeth Fry, bringing their cause to the attention of the elite.[64] The bags may have been purchased for a variety of reasons, but once purchased they also entered the material world of their owner. In the same way as Walker and Ware suggest in 'Political Pincushions' that Wedgwood's slave cameo functioned

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[62] Clive Edwards, 'Home is Where the Art is', *Journal of Design History* 19, no.1 (2006):13; Rozika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Woman's Press, 1996; first published 1984), 213.

[63] Sturge, *Memoir*, 31.

[64] 'Memorial of Lucy Townsend', *Twenty-Second Report of the FSB*, MS 3173/2, BAH.

as a Trojan Horse, so too could the work bags, beautiful on the outside, but bearing radical anti-slavery literature within.[65] Their display in the home might have provoked serious female discussion around the tea table on weightier matters than needlework: whether to join the abstention campaign; what it must be like to suffer the horrors of slavery and, worst of all, have one's children sold. Women might also discuss whether to join the FSB, tempted by the prospect of involvement in a female network that engaged in philanthropy and politics. The workbags and their contents, in permeating the walls of domesticity, with their combination of conservative and radical imagery, language and material culture, imported politics into the home and to the tea table, further blurring the distinction between public and private. As Laurence Klein has shown, 'the distinction between the private and the public did not correspond to the distinction between home and not-home'.[66] In conveying to women radical propaganda which brought to life the cruelty of slavery across the world, the workbags legitimized, in the name of Christianity, philanthropy, female solidarity and the entry of women into the political arena.

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[65] Lynne Walker and Vron Ware, 'Political Pincushions: Decorating the Abolitionist Interior 1787-1865', in *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, edited by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press (hereafter MUP), 1999), 70-2; see also Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women*, 33-35.

[66] Lawrence Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no.1 (1995): 104-5.

At the annual meeting of the FSB, in April 1830, frustrated by the men's Anti-Slavery Society's lack of progress towards immediate emancipation, a new resolution was passed by the membership which was conveyed to the men's Anti-Slavery Society by the joint secretary Lucy Townsend:

> This society, being anxious not to compromise their own principles, nor to give sanction to anything which falls short of the standard of Right, will appropriate £50 to the London Gentleman's Anti-Slavery Society when they are willing to give up the word gradual in their title.[67]

This resolution gave notice that subsidies to the Anti-Slavery Society would cease unless it changed its policy and campaigned for immediate abolition. Within seven weeks, the Anti-Slavery Society removed 'mitigation and gradual abolition' from their title.[68] How much Townsend's communication had influenced this decision is not recorded, but opinion within the men's Association began to swing towards immediate emancipation. Townsend, Lloyd and the FSB had achieved their first major objective; the next one, the end of British colonial slavery, would be gained three years later with the passing of the 1833 Emancipation Act. Townsend remained joint-secretary until 1836 and a committee member until 1845; Lloyd was joint-secretary until the 1830s and treasurer from the 1840s to 1861.[69] Although no doubt primarily motivated by their Christian agency, much of what was done in the FSB by Townsend and Lloyd was down to their supportive friendship and their

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[67] 'Minutes of the meeting of the FSB, 8 April 1830', 100, MS 3173/1, BAH.

[68] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 115.

[69] Midgley, Clare. 2013 "Lloyd [née Honeychurch], Mary (1795–1865), slavery abolitionist." *ODNB.*

executive skills. They not only ran efficient and dynamic organisations, but also initiated, along with Heyrick, the major change from gradual to immediate abolition. Obituaries of Lloyd and Townsend in FSB annual reports testify to their influence in guiding the Society in their anti-slavery campaign.[70] Midgley suggests that Townsend, like Elizabeth Heyrick, was a campaigner of national stature.[71]

Townsend and Lloyd employed their friendship to devise two joint ventures, one which provided an education for deaf-mute children, who were ignored by society, and the other a national society with an international reach, where, thanks to their deployment of networks to spread their philanthropic ideas, they contributed to the campaign for the abolition of slavery in British Territories. Despite their denominational differences, they worked for a common cause, and at the same time carved out roles for themselves as leaders in the women's anti-slavery movement. Ferguson goes further and suggests that 'after 1828, women visibly dominated the movement'.[72] One leading American campaigner, Lucretia Mott, confirmed Mary Lloyd's strategic and networking ability, commenting that 'she was the first to

[70] *Twenty-Second Report of the FSB*, 12-20; *Fortieth Report of the FSB,* 1865, 35-9, MS 3173/2, BAH.

[71] Midgley*, Women Against Slavery,198-9.*

[72] Edith F. Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), quoted in Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 261.

suggest the formation of Female Anti-Slavery societies in America'.[73] In a striking example of the appropriateness of the metaphor of rhizomes, Lucy Townsend's and Mary Lloyd's friendship formed the basis for the development, growing out of their earlier experiences within the Bible Society, of further local and national voluntary female associations with philanthropic ends. Making use of feminine rhetoric and craft skills, by 1830 they had developed sufficient authority as campaigners to challenge their male counterparts and – tellingly – to do so successfully.

Rebecca Kenrick (1799-1891)

Background

Born in 1799, Rebecca Kenrick was the second of five children of Unitarian Archibald Kenrick (1760-1835) and his wife, Rebecca (1770-1809) (née Smith) of West Bromwich. Rebecca's father came to the Midlands in about 1780. A descendant of impoverished Welsh gentry, he was apprenticed to the iron trade, and in 1791 switched from the unfashionable buckle trade to cast-iron utility products, becoming a successful iron founder in West Bromwich. He and Rebecca Smith married in 1790 and from 1793 lived at Springfields, an old mansion house near the foundry. Joseph Smith, Rebecca's father, settled £500 upon her immediately, plus £500 a year, in addition to a share of his estate following his death. Importantly for Kenrick, Joseph Smith allowed him access to his wife's capital, with her permission, enabling Kenrick, as Matthew Boulton had done (Chapter 1), to

[73] Frederick B. Tolles, editor, 'Slavery and "The Woman Question": Lucretia Mott's Diary of Her Visit to Great Britain to Attend the World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840', *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society,* supplement no. 23 (1952): 18.

invest in an expansion of his business into new hollow-ware products, which made the family wealthy.[74]

The Kenricks became influential in the social and cultural life of West Bromwich and Birmingham and were known for their philanthropic projects. The young Rebecca first went away to school in 1808 at the age of nine, a year before her mother's death. By 1813 she was at the progressive school of the Unitarian Misses Byerley, in Warwick, whose other pupils had included Elizabeth Gaskell and Joseph Priestley's grand-daughters. French, German and Italian were taught, and the girls were educated and trained to become interesting, modest and feminine wives. Her father married again in 1812 to Mary Eddowes (1763-1854), and Rebecca and her step-mother seem to have formed a good relationship. An affectionate letter from her father while she was still at school in 1813, reminded Rebecca that at the age of fourteen it was time 'to exercise your understanding in your employment of your time', an important element of her father's Unitarian faith and his drive to succeed.[75]

As a young woman, Rebecca's letters and diary indicate the normal round of visits to relatives and friends, dances and balls, open to young girls who lived a comfortable middle-class life. Lengthy visits to her brother George, who ran the family iron works in Varteg, near Pontypool, were sociable, with dinners, picnics and excursions. Rebecca also enjoyed horse riding and the family kept a carriage, all of

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[74] R. A. Church, *Kenricks in Hardware: A Family Business 1791-1966* (New York: Kelley, 1969), 30; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 250.

[75] Mrs W. Byng Kenrick, *Chronicles of a Nonconformist Family: The Kenricks of Wynne Hall Exeter and Birmingham* (hereafter *Chronicles*) (Birmingham: Cornish, 1932), 164-5.

which suggests they were sufficiently prosperous, apart from times when iron prices fell, to enjoy a high standard of material comfort.[76] Letters from Rebecca's brother, Archibald II, to his wife Ann Paget suggest that the latter spent long periods with her family at their country home in Leicestershire, possibly due to the pollution in West Bromwich, and Rebecca, when she was not left to care for Ann's children at home, sometimes accompanied her. On one visit in 1829 she wrote to her cousin Lucy, a regular correspondent, heading the letter: 'Entertaining Letter from Cousin Rebecca', in which she describes her summer visits, and recounts a conversation she had had at the Pagets' house:

> Mrs White said I ought to stay longer for I did not know how useful I might make myself to Mrs Charles Paget in her approaching confinement! so I explained to her that we did not chuse [sic] the state of single blessedness for the sake of nursing all our female friends who chose to get married and I did not intend to offer my services beyond my own family.[77]

This suggests Rebecca had an independent mind, but in fact Rebecca's time, when not engaged in philanthropy, was almost wholly taken up in caring for her parents and her siblings and their families, especially expectant or nursing mothers, or sick children, or minding children in their parents' absence. Her role within the family, as an unmarried daughter, was that of helpmeet to anyone within the family who so desired her assistance. In 1834 her father was in poor health and died the following year after a short illness. The main business passed to Rebecca's brothers,

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[76] Rebecca Kenrick to Timothy Kenrick, 24 June 1833, Kenrick, *Chronicles*, 218-220.

[77] Rebecca Kenrick to Lucy Kenrick, 16 June 1829, in Kenrick, *Chronicles*, 211.

Archibald II and Timothy, who were already partners and running the business, Archibald Kenrick & Sons.[78] Life resumed its normal pattern of running the house for her step-mother and caring for various family members, especially nieces and nephews. Her diary for the 1840s and 1850s makes constant reference to these duties. In January 1841 she recorded that she spent five weeks with Maria, her youngest brother Timothy's wife, following the birth of Clara Marie, while in June she spent a month with her eldest brother Archibald's 'unruly' children, presumably while their parents went away. By November she was back, nursing them through measles.[79] By 1847, her step-mother had become forgetful and when her personal servant left in 1850 she was not replaced; Rebecca took over the duties of nurse, with the help of servants, until her step-mother died in 1854.[80] Trips away were almost impossible in that period, whereas previously, as in 1839, she had spent time in Italy, and had often gone away to stay with girlfriends.[81] In 1850 she was bridesmaid to her friend Louisa in London but could only be spared for one day. In 1851 there was a rare pleasure trip to the Great Exhibition in London, when she recorded: 'Mrs Smith took my place at home'.[82]

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[78] Church, *Kenricks in Hardware*, 38-9.

[79] Diary entries for January 1841, 1:8; June 1841, 1:9; November 1841, 1:11, 'Diaries of Rebecca Kenrick, 1839-1889' 2 vols, unpublished manuscript, Kenrick Collection, MS 2024/1/1-2, BAH (hereafter 'Kenrick Diaries').

[80] Diary entry 1850, 1:57, (no day or month), 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[81] Diary entries, 1839 (undated): 1:1, 9 March 1843, 1:17, Ibid.

[82] Diary entries, summer 1850, 1:55-6; 12 May 1851, 1:60, 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

Much of Rebecca's free time was spent as companion to her aging step-mother, devoting the rest to philanthropy, while her brothers were busy with their own business, domestic, social and philanthropic lives. Davidoff and Hall observe that for single women, 'the loss of a brother's company could be keenly felt', even though, in this case, Archibald and his family lived nearby.[83] Caroline Herschel, for example, complained: 'I seldom saw my brother in the evening'. She was almost always alone then because her astronomer brother retreated to his bedroom to read.[84] Women such as Rebecca Kenrick and Caroline Herschel, perhaps alone apart from servants in the day time, might then have envied married couples who could spend evenings in one another's company. Although, or perhaps because, she was unmarried, Rebecca's life was dominated by the demands of family. Notably, the Kenrick brothers controlled the family money, and although Rebecca received an allowance, she was expected to help out in return.[85] The next section examines Rebecca Kenrick's philanthropic engagement and suggests that while on the surface this may appear to have provided her with an opportunity for independent action, in reality much of her voluntary activity was influenced by her family.

Philanthropy

In November 1841, Rebecca Kenrick wrote in her diary: 'I enjoyed my home after my summer's wandering, particularly … Out of door occupations were gardening

[83] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 350.

[84] David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby*, The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 176.

[85] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*,219.

and visiting the poor'.[86] Like many never-married women of her generation, she was involved in extensive local philanthropy. As Davidoff and Hall have argued, the scale of the philanthropic efforts of such women is difficult to determine as so much was carried out informally.[87] In addition, women's charitable work was often obscured behind the public philanthropic profiles of male family members. The men occupied the platforms of fund-raising events, and their names were often on subscription lists, even when the women ran the voluntary associations. Although philanthropy could be an escape from onerous domestic responsibility, it could also be part of the chain of obligation to the family enterprise.

As Prochaska and others have observed, charity was often 'a means of consolidating local influence': it was good for business.[88] The Kenrick men, as foundry owners and metalware manufacturers, understood this. Successful Midland iron masters, the family belonged to a network of Nonconformist industrial and professional Liberals who often intermarried, and in the late nineteenth-century would shape politics and civic development in Birmingham and the Black Country.[89]

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[86] Diary entry November 1841, 1:10, (no day), 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[87] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 432.

[88] Prochaska, *Disinherited Spirit*, 17.

[89] Rebecca's two nieces, Harriet and Florence, became the first and second wives of Joseph Chamberlain. Florence was the mother of Neville Chamberlain, later prime minister: E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (London: Arnold, 1973), 17-38; Crozier, Andrew J. 'Chamberlain, (Arthur) Neville (1869-1940), prime minister.' *ODNB;*

Philanthropy, usually in the form of sponsorship and subscriptions to voluntary associations, raised the family and Company profile in the business, civic and Unitarian community, and the women of the family were often expected to contribute their time to this family project.

Despite the Kenrick family's Unitarian enlightenment, the financial independence of their women had not improved since the marriage of Rebecca Kenrick's mother, whose dowry, like those of Sally Wedgwood and Anne and Mary Boulton in Chapter 1, had formed the foundation of the family company's success.[90] In contrast to Anne Boulton junior's financial independence a generation earlier, seen in Chapter 1 and 4, Rebecca Kenrick was given a £300 annual allowance from the business in return for giving her time to the family's needs. This provided only token independence, insufficient to maintain an establishment to match those of her wealthy parents and brothers, and certainly not comparable with Anne Boulton's annual income of between £2,000 and £5,000, thus ensuring she either married or remained in the family home to care for her ageing step-mother, or at the beck and call of her demanding siblings and their partners.[91]

Rebecca's father, Archibald Kenrick, had championed the Education League and the Sunday school movement and founded a Provident Society for his workers. By

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http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32347; accessed 12 February 2019.

[90] Church, *Kenricks in Hardware,* 46.

[91] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 219. At their deaths, Archibald II's wealth was just below £90,000 in 1878, Timothy's was £150,000 in 1885, see: Church, *Kenricks in Hardware*, 43.

1834, the year before his death, Rebecca was representing the family in the now integrated Provident and Dorcas Society, which helped the working class to save and provided linen for the poor.[92] By 1842, Archibald's sons, Archibald II and Timothy, had established the Summit school for boys, girls and infants, but Rebecca Kenrick was already running an infant school in 1841, as her diary records: 'Lost our Infant School governess and got another one'.[93] As in this instance, while the details of the men's activities are recorded publicly, the work of women like Kenrick is often only traceable through private papers.[94] Combined, these sources provide a more complete picture: that her brothers presented the public face of a philanthropic family, yet the responsibility of day-to-day management of the charities was that of their never-married sister. Gendered conventions and family expectation usually decreed woman's philanthropic role not as a policy maker, but as an unacknowledged organiser. Kenrick played an important role in the family charities, but it was her male relatives who held the reins of power.

This divide is well illustrated by the Provident and Dorcas annual meeting held in 1834 in West Bromwich. The committee consisted mainly of women, who did much of the work, but convention required that the chairman should be male, in this case

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[92] Church, *Kenricks in Hardware*, 42-3; Kenrick, *Chronicles*, 226-7.

[93] Diary entry 1841, 1:12, (no day or month), 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[94] See: A. P. Baggs, G. C. Baugh and Johnston D. A., 'West Bromwich: Education', in *A History of the County of Stafford*, edited by M. W. Greenslade, Vol. 17 of *Victoria County History* (London: 1976), [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol17/pp74-83, accessed 7 August 2015] (hereafter *VCH*); Church, *Kenricks in Hardware,* 42-3.

the Rev. Charles Townsend, Anglican curate of West Bromwich, the husband of Lucy Townsend, mentioned in the previous section.[95] In a heavily industrialised town like West Bromwich, a centre of iron founding, the middle class quickly identified themselves to each other and co-operated and socialised together, as Mary Lloyd and Lucy Townsend did. Just as Amanda Vickery has shown, among the mixed Georgian society of Lancashire, networks of religion, wealth, commercial and professional interests co-operated across a matrix of shared interests.[96]

As Morgan observes, despite being united by class and often kinship, the nature of committees in voluntary associations offered a potential for conflict along gendered lines. He cites the case of the Leeds Institute Bazaar, where the men's committee, despite assurances, persistently failed to consult the women's committee on issues concerning them, leading to the resignation of three prominent committee women. The men were seemingly unaware that the women were the source of the labour that not only ran the bazaar, but also produced the goods sold to provide the Institute's income.[97] Relations in the West Bromwich Provident and Dorcas committee could be just as fraught. Rebecca's cousin and brother-in-law, Samuel Kenrick, provided, in a letter to his sister Lucy, a written account of this Dorcas meeting, at which the women's male relatives seemed determined to change the society's policy. As the female secretary had declined to prepare the annual report the task fell to Rebecca. She dictated the report to Samuel beforehand, and he

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[95] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery,* 72.

[96] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), 29-33.

[97] Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place*, 113-20.

presented it at the meeting, in tacit recognition of the gender convention, still applied in provincial West Bromwich, which derogated public speaking by women.[98] Samuel Kenrick's letter humorously detailed various attempts by the ladies to object to the report, probably on the grounds of his influence on the proceedings. After an amendment was made, the vote being equal, the chairman used his casting vote 'in favour of our side'. That is, the masculine side. Samuel wrote to his sister:

> Two of the committee had voted against their own Report, Mrs Wagstaff had voted against her conscience that she might be a 'good neighbour' to Mrs Hood, & Mrs Townsend had voted against her husband [the Chairman who had had the casting vote].
>
> When Mrs Harper found that we had gained the point she exclaimed as she advanced to the table where the Chairman was, I don't care what you vote I'll do as I like in my District. Mam, says our Master, advancing on the other side of the table in a great Puff, amongst men the Minority allways [sic] submit to the Majority. I don't care what you do retorts Mrs Harper, but the altercation was carried no farther.[99]

Samuel Kenrick's humorous but patronising epistle to his sister, highlighting women members' ignorance of committee procedure, could not hide the fact that the women, including Kenrick, had ambitions to run their own committee without interference. Although the account illustrates that women like Mrs Harper had much to learn about committee procedure, or indeed that they were happy to flout

[98] Samuel Kenrick to Lucy Kenrick, 19 December 1834, in Kenrick, *Chronicles*, 226.

[99] Samuel Kenrick to Lucy Kenrick, 19 December 1834, in Kenrick, *Chronicles*, 226-27.

procedure when they felt their independence was being threatened, it also reveals the men's actions in dominating the proceedings unconstitutionally. Samuel Kenrick's use of the phrase 'we had gained the point' and the reaction of Mrs Harper suggests that the men had agreed a separate agenda of rule changes beforehand, without consulting the women. As in Leeds, the men seemed not to realise that without the women to raise money, purchase linen and arrange the sewing, there could be no Dorcas association, and therefore no linen for the poor.[100] Committees were political tools, and increasingly conscious of this, women like Mrs Harper were motivated to fight to protect their autonomy, even if not always successfully.

Anthony Trollope caricatured a town's Dorcas sewing group in *Rachel Ray,* his novel of middle-class life published some decades later, showing it dominated by bigoted, gossiping evangelical women. As editor P.D. Edwards observes, 'Nowhere in *Rachel Ray* are Trollope's class prejudices more glaringly evident than in his treatment of low-church evangelicalism'.[101] In West Bromwich, the letters and diaries of the Kenrick family draw a different picture, one in which the Dorcas was only one of several important local charities requiring professional, albeit unremunerated, management by middle-class women. Lucy Townsend, by 1825, was already the joint-secretary of the first female anti-slavery society in Birmingham which had an international reach. Rebecca Kenrick, meanwhile, worked at a more local level, with a wide range of philanthropic responsibilities at various times,

[100] Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place*, 119-205.

[101] P.D. Edwards, 'Introduction' in Anthony Trollope, *Rachel Ray*, edited by P. D. Edwards, (Oxford: OUP, 2008, first published 1863), xv.

including Sunday schools, three day-schools, a Provident and Dorcas society and three Temperance associations.

As the schools grew, Kenrick increasingly took on an administrative role at both the Summit Schools and Graham Street School, which was near her brother's home, four miles away in Handsworth. The Summit schools catered for the children of the Kenrick foundry workmen in West Bromwich, but also accepted local children. Such philanthropy served the Kenricks' interests in meeting their religious responsibilities as practising Nonconformists, raising their status as local philanthropists and providing future disciplined, literate workmen.[102] In 1850 Rebecca Kenrick wrote: 'Appointed 2 pupil-teachers to our girls' school', a sign that pupil numbers were increasing. When in 1852 she interviewed for a new teacher, her pleasure at discovering that the new railway provided her with a better calibre of candidates suggests a growing professional interest in the schools.[103] Increasingly, it can be argued that women's philanthropic responsibilities encompassed work of a professional, albeit unpaid and unacknowledged, nature, and mirrored male occupations that were becoming increasingly professionalised, regulated and subjected to educational entry requirements.

Hurried entries in Kenrick's diary show both a busy pace and the pastoral care offered to local children: 'Occupied much time … Sunday school for Boys to tea and Graham Street girls during the summer'. This entry followed three weeks of minding her brother's five children while his wife convalesced. The following year, 1844, she noted, 'Factory school to tea … Boys Sunday School and Graham Street Schools

[102] Baggs, Baugh and Johnston, 'West Bromwich Education', *VCH*, 74-83.

[103] Diary entry, 1850, 1:56, 1852, 1:70 (no days) 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

to tea at Handsworth and several Gypsy parties'.[104] Although Archibald and her sister-in-law lived in Handsworth, Rebecca seems to have been the organiser there. Davidoff and Hall have read Kenrick's philanthropic work as a happy escape from boredom, and while this may have been the case – she gained, for instance, much satisfaction from the schools, especially when they passed their inspections – her diary entries often reflected the weight of the responsibility. In 1842 she wrote: 'A sad, heavy time … for many of the poor … what a privilege it is to have the means of helping them a little'.[105] In addition she was charged with nursing her ageing step-mother and her extended family of siblings, their nervous and delicate partners and unruly children.[106]

As a younger woman, Rebecca had taken a keen interest in science. In 1831, while staying with her cousin the Revd John Kenrick in York, she attended lectures on geology during the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Writing to Rebecca's father, her cousin commented dryly: You will find Rebecca return to you a great geologist … [she] can not only tell the difference between granite and gneiss, but give you the history of the world before the Flood and even before the Creation'.[107] She attended again in York in 1844, possibly with

[104] Diary entries, 1843 (no day) 1:19, 1844, 1:23-4, 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[105] Diary entry, 2 August 1849, 1:53, 1842, 1:16 (no day), 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 435.

[106] Diary entry June 1850, 1:57, 1:54, 1841, 1:9, 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[107] Revd. John Kenrick to Archibald Kenrick, 13 May 1831, in Kenrick, *Chronicles*, 217.

her brother George and cousin Samuel, who were life members.[108] As a single woman with an aptitude for a subject, she could only pursue science as an occasional 'interest', while her brothers received a scientific education for the benefit of the family business. Her step-mother's health, by 1847, restricted Kenrick even more, and may have brought a sense of isolation. This was exacerbated by her brothers Archibald and Timothy deciding to move themselves and their families to the elite middle-class enclave of Edgbaston, Birmingham, also from 1847, when she noted that she saw less of the family and 'mother's decay keeps me more at home'.[109] The brothers may have followed their charismatic minister George Dawson, who left Handsworth in 1846 to found the Church of the Saviour in Birmingham, taking many leading Nonconformist and Liberal entrepreneurial families with him. The Kenricks were quickly absorbed into the elite social and economic set of the entrepreneurial families of the Chamberlains, the Nettlefolds and the Martineaus in Birmingham, supporters of Dawson and founders of the Birmingham Liberal political group.[110] Kenrick's diary gives mournful confirmation: 'Mr Dawson has made a stir in the religious world in Birmingham and robbed our chapel of many members'.[111]

Despite her brothers' defection she maintained her philanthropic responsibilities, her diary showing her motives as a mixture of genuine concern for the poor, social guilt

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[108] *Report of the Fourteenth meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, September 1844* (London: Murray, 1845), List of Members, 14.

[109] Diary entry 1847 (no day), 1:37-8,' Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[110] Wright Wilson, *The Life of George Dawson* (Birmingham: Percival, 1905), 52-56.

[111] Diary entry 1845 (no day), 1:29 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

and religious anxiety, as she wrote: 'I live a very happy life and am often trying to improve heart and mind', but the dominant motive driving her was family expectation.[112] It would have been a difficult step to turn away from philanthropy. As Judith Spicksley has argued, such 'singular behaviour' was a luxury only for the very rich and there was no prospect of that for Rebecca.[113] As the business prospered, Rebecca's brothers Archibald II and Timothy increased their civic activity; both became magistrates; Archibald also became chairman of the Board of Commissioners in West Bromwich. Possibly because they were more in the public eye as well as having the Unitarian belief in education and enlightenment, they also extended their support of public charities, subscribing £500 in 1858 towards the fund for acquiring Aston Hall, former home of Lady Holte (chapter 1) and later, James Watt junior (chapter 4), as a place for public recreation. Like their father Archibald, they supported the Education League. In 1864 Rebecca's brother Archibald became chairman of the Provident Medical Dispensary, and Timothy was an active committee member for the Birmingham General Hospital, as well as a founder of the Nurses' Training Institution, to which he gifted a house.[114]

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[112] Ibid., 1842, 1:16.

[113] Judith Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations: Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the "Spinster" in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800,* edited by Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004). 179.

[114] Church*, Kenricks in Hardware,*42-3; Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, 46.

Temperance Societies

The Kenrick family was also deeply involved in the temperance movement in West Bromwich, partly because they employed many workers in their foundries and metal shops there. Such workers traditionally drank alcohol to rehydrate themselves after the intense heat of the foundries. Some employers, like the Darbys of Coalbrookdale, allowed their men a daily ration of beer in recognition of this, inadvertently contributing to a culture of excessive alcohol consumption among their employees.[115] Rebecca Kenrick was responsible for the temperance societies funded by her brothers. She struggled to keep the poor of Handsworth engaged in her temperance projects, but in 1851 formed a plan with her niece Emma and her friends the Chance sisters, daughters of local wealthy glass manufacturers, 'of establishing a Mission in West Bromwich'.[116] Archibald agreed to be the Treasurer, both brothers funded the mission and it is their names that are found in public records.[117] But Rebecca Kenrick had another, more personal motive, revealed when she wrote: 'Of great interest to me for many reasons-Can work with nieces'.[118] Living in West Bromwich with her ageing step-mother, and increasingly isolated from her brothers and their families, now enjoying an elite society life in Birmingham, it seems that Kenrick's motive had been to regain contact with her nieces.[119] In negotiating her family's unintended neglect, Kenrick faced the unresolvable paradoxes arising

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[115] Arthur Raistrick, *Dynasty of Iron Founders* (York: Sessions, 1989, first published 1953), 228-9.

[116] Diary entry, 1851 (no date), 1:61-2, 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[117] See: Baggs, Baugh and Johnston, 'West Bromwich Education', *VCH*, 82.

[118] Diary entry, summer 1851, 1:62-3, 'Kenrick Diaries', BAH.

[119] Church, *Kenrick in Hardware,* 42.

from cultural and political expressions that Joan Scott recognised in so many women's lives and those of disempowered groups. Being paradoxes, they could not be resolved permanently, but could be ameliorated in the face of different events at different points in history, both by groups, like Scott's feminists or anti-racists, for example, or by individuals, as Rebecca Kenrick's and Abiah Darby's experiences have demonstrated.[120] Unlike Anne Boulton's father a generation earlier, Rebecca Kenrick's father had not seen fit to make her independent of her brothers, which left her relatively powerless in the family hierarchy. During Rebecca's life-time, loving family relationships were often based on women's economic dependence and perhaps on increasingly rigid gendered roles, particularly when it came to women's exclusion from involvement in the business.[121]

Yet although the brothers were the undisputed heads of the family, Rebecca Kenrick employed her agency to re-establish a place for herself within the family through philanthropic activities, empowering herself to build strong relationships with her nieces and other women. Except for Rebecca's niece Emma, the next generation of Kenrick women did not feel obliged to put their energies into philanthropic activity as their fathers moved into wider public affairs and higher social circles.[122] One

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[120] Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (London: HUP, 1998), 17, 174. For the impermanence of women's public roles see also Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 17.

[121] See, for example, Barbara Caine, *Destined to be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

[122] Church, *Kenricks in Hardware,* 42-3.

niece, Caroline, kept a journal, but records of visiting the poor are absent.[123] It is possible that over time Kenrick's brothers developed a different attitude to their children's duties than to those of their sister, Rebecca, still regarded as the never-married dependant who ought to support the family enterprise.

Conclusion

Kenrick's single state and subsequent economic dependence on her brothers helped to shape her philanthropic commitments and form her identity as one of many never-married women dedicated to charitable work. Although there is no evidence that she disliked or resented her philanthropic activities, she was clearly directed by her brothers' interests to the many she managed on their behalf. Motives for entering philanthropy could be complicated. Financial, social and cultural strands, often involving class and gender, could be intricately woven into good works. Perhaps the most beneficial and valued effect of voluntary associations for many women was the opportunity to access and develop further female networks, contributing to the rhizomatic effect identified by Gleadle. Some, as Kenrick discovered with the Dorcas society, Lucy Townsend and the indignant Mrs Harper, could be supportive in the face of perceived male interference, and others, as in Rebecca's own decision to form a temperance society with the Chance sisters, provided a space for her to maintain close female friendships and re-establish regular contact with her nieces.

Lucy Townsend and Mary Lloyd had a much more obvious autonomy to choose which causes they supported, and their close friendship influenced their decisions,

[123] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 431-2.

arguably not only because they shared common goals, but because they wished to pursue those goals together. They successfully established their identities as philanthropists, their autonomous roles recognised as such by leading members of the men's Anti-Slavery Association, such as Joseph Sturge, James Cropper and Zachary Macaulay, in a striking contrast to the West Bromwich Dorcas society's vicissitudes. Even Wilberforce's disapproval can be seen as a token of their professionalism and vision.[124] Their local charities were similarly respected and supported by the public, their deployment of a feminine rhetoric and imagery ensured, for example, that significant numbers of women encouraged their children to contribute to The Juvenile Association in Aid of Uninstructed Deaf Mutes.

With Rebecca Kenrick, family loyalty took precedence above all else, and she allowed her brothers if not to dictate, then to influence which causes she managed. Nevertheless, she found in philanthropy a source of satisfaction, as well as a considerable responsibility. Like Townsend and Lloyd, and despite her economic dependence on her brothers, she negotiated a space from which she could practise her philanthropy. Such spaces inspired women with confidence to undertake additional challenges: Townsend and Lloyd with the formation of the FSB, and Kenrick, in negotiating funding from her brothers for a new Temperance Society in which she incorporated family and friendship. When the Female Society for Birmingham of Lucy Townsend and Mary Lloyd, and the schools and temperance work of Rebecca Kenrick are compared, it can be seen that while highly diverse: one concerned with the mission abroad, the other the mission at home, such

[124] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 49.

associations, as Twells has argued, were part of a national interest in promoting philanthropy; not a movement – these were individual associations – but a shared mission, certainly, although they would eventually diverge. In the first half of the nineteenth century they 'informed each other' and fulfilled similar objectives: one, in the expanding empire, the overseas mission, and the other, domestically, the home mission. Importantly, the experience assisted the middle class in consolidating its position in society.[125]

With the benefit of hindsight, Midgley suggests that these British women volunteers were complicit in maintaining the social and racial hierarchy by providing justification 'for the continuance of imperial rule through its re-presentation as social mission rather than exploitation and violence'.[126] It would be interesting to know what Rebecca Kenrick in particular thought of this accusation; a woman whose own life was largely shaped by service to her wealthy family. What she, as well as Townsend and Lloyd, may well have been happy to acknowledge, was the role of their extensive networks of like-minded female philanthropists in cementing middle-class authority and power. The meticulous self-fashioning of the middle-class as an industrious, educated, polite and humane social group by the mid-nineteenth century, a depiction that Lloyd, Townsend and Kenrick would all have recognised, had won it both possession of the moral high ground, and control of the cultural life of the nation.[127]

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[125] Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, 213-16.

[126] Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 148; see also Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party*.

[127] Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, 219.

Chapter 4: Domesticity

Introduction

In recent years historians have challenged the notion of a simple distinction between a private, feminine sphere and a public, masculine sphere during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the power of the association of femininity with domesticity and women's role in creating the material culture of the home should not be underestimated.[1] Paying particular attention to the

[1] See, for example, David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press (hereafter MUP), 2010); John Tosh*, A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, with new Preface (London: Yale University Press (hereafter YUP), 2007, first published 1999); Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris, 2007); Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (London: YUP, 2003); Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP), 2001); Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability 1600-1800* (London: Routledge, 2002); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, rev. ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002, first published 1987 by Hutchinson).

significance of domestic possessions and their acquisition, as well as their loss, this chapter explores how four Midlands-based women navigated their way round the pressures and expectations of domesticity, considering whether and how their identities were shaped by those experiences.

Section one compares the experiences of two Georgian women who were both wealthy; despite being a generation apart they maintained a lifelong friendship, both living in Handsworth, near Birmingham, yet their motives for the choices they made in the matter of furnishing their homes were very different. One, Annie Watt (1744-1832) was married to James Watt, and one, Anne Boulton (1768-1829) was the unmarried daughter of Matthew Boulton, Watt's partner (Chapter 1 of this thesis). Despite what we might expect from the literature on consumption, and even though she stamped her authority on domestic material culture, Annie Watt did not embrace its full potential, preferring instead to endorse qualities of thriftiness and moderation. On the other hand, despite being a 'spinster', and seemingly aware of the word's negative connotations, Anne Boulton made the most of the possibilities for middle-class consumption and sociability available to a comfortably-off woman. Section two examines the experiences of one unmarried woman, Catherine Hutton (1757-1846), during and following the Birmingham Riots of 1791. An analysis of her situation provides insights into the value, and loss, of material culture to a woman's identity. It also investigates how Hutton found resolution by stressing her credentials as a respectable middle-class woman, while at the same time challenging the boundaries of domestic femininity by her extensive travels. Section 3 analyses one woman's experiences of marriage and domesticity following a match that clearly owed more to affection than economic calculation. Elizabeth Ann Wheler (1808-1906) (neé Galton) whose life, like

Hutton's crossed the Georgian-Victorian threshold, exchanged her upper middle-class life with her parents for a life of relatively straitened, certainly diminished, circumstances as the wife of a gentleman without visible means of support. Her efforts to maintain her former status and identity are the subject of this analysis.

Recent research has offered analyses of the connection between identity, material culture and society. The work of Kathryn Gleadle and contributions to collected essays edited by Henry French and Jonathan Barry have shown that women, as historical actors, moved between personal and group identities as circumstances either warranted or dictated, often choosing a familial group identity to access public spaces.[2] John Potvin and Alla Myzelev show that identity is not formed in isolation but in contact with 'the social, the material and the visual', and Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan emphasise the link, seen in studies on consumption, between goods, ritual and identity, 'what is owned and what it means being an expression of, and a key in, defining identity'.[3]

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[2] See: Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain 1815-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP, 2009), 255-6; Henry French and Jonathan Barry, editors, *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), 3-4 and 31-3.

[3] John Potvin and Alla Myzelev, 'Introduction' in *Material Cultures, 1740-1920: The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting,* edited by Potvin and Myzelev (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 2; Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1680-1830* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 11.

Annie Watt (1744-1832) and Anne Boulton (1768-1829)

Annie Watt (née McGrIgor), who featured in Chapter 1 of this thesis, was the daughter of a Glasgow cloth merchant and dyer and when she married James Watt in 1776, she brought valuable skills to the marriage as an efficient manager who had helped her father in his business. She also had sufficient knowledge of chemistry to help him set up a bleaching business, at Watt's suggestion.[4] As Hannah Barker has argued, artisan and commercial families of the long eighteenth century sought to provide suitable training for their children, 'both as part of a strategy to ensure ongoing prosperity for the family, and as evidence of a concern for the futures of individual offspring'.[5] Girls like Annie and Elizabeth Shaw were often trained to work in or even manage their family's business. As seen in chapter 1, Annie Watt supported James in his business of designing and producing steam engines, especially during his frequent absences while he installed engines countrywide; she also provided essential moral support during his frequent spells of anxiety.[6] At the same time, she was primarily responsible for running the home and rearing the children: James Watt (1736-1819) had two children from his first

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[4] James Watt to Annie Watt, 10 September 1787, MS 3219/4/267A/15, Birmingham Archives and Heritage (hereafter BAH), Birmingham.

[5] Hannah Barker, *Family and Business During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 2017) 121; see also: Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England 1760-1830* (Oxford: OUP, 2006).

[6] See, for example, James Watt to Annie Watt, 27 February 1780, MS 3219/4/267/8, BAH. See also: Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future 1730-1810* (London: Faber, 2002).

marriage; James Jnr, who joined their household, and Margaret, who lived with an aunt in Scotland. Annie and James also had two children: Gregory, who died aged twenty-seven and Janet, who died aged fifteen, both from tuberculosis.[7]

In middle age Annie Watt and her husband embarked on a plan to build a new home: her approach to the material culture of domesticity, which emerged from her engagement in this project, is considered here, while the following section contrasts that with Anne Boulton's rather different approach to setting up a new home. Recent studies of consumption have foregrounded the connections between 'goods, ritual and identity' showing how the growth of consumption might have contributed to the process through which 'identities [are] created and projected'.[8] Annie Watt embarked on forays into the world of goods as a woman who had a reputation for thrift and efficiency at a time when luxury and comfort were increasingly becoming the centre of much homemaking. This section examines how Watt dealt with this interesting tension between self-conscious identity and the allure of increasing materialism.

Thrift

In 1785, Annie Watt wrote to James from Glasgow, condemning its citizens' new consumer habits. She lamented that 'this country has grown very wicked … at least outwardly the[y] have adopted many English customs such as feasting and drinking [,] strolling about on Sunday which brings them in to expenses that they

[7] Tann, Jennifer, 2014 "Watt, James (1736–1819), engineer and scientist." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28880; accessed 23 July 2018.

[8] Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Leisure,* 11.

cannot support.'[9] These views give some insight into Annie's utilitarian principles. She would certainly not fit Neil McKendrick's once influential theoretical model of the middle ranks, in which 'Spurred on by social emulation and class competition men and women surrendered eagerly to the pursuit of novelty'. It was more likely she would have approved of items that Maxine Berg describes as 'conveying a new appreciation of "decency" and "utility"'.[10]

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[9] Annie Watt to James Watt, 17 September 1785, MS II/9/2, BAH.

[10] Neil McKendrick 'The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-century England', in *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, edited by N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J.H. Plumb (London: Europa, 1982), 11; Maxine Berg, 'New Commodities, Luxuries and their Consumers in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850*, edited by Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester: MUP 1999), 66. On middle-class consumption see also: Hamlett, *Material Relations*; Stobart *et al*, *Spaces of Leisure;* Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (New Haven and London: YUP, 2006); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2005); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760*, 2nd edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996, first published 1988); John Brewer and Roy Porter, editors, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994, first published 1993); Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington: The Strong Museum, 1988).

Two years later, when James was fifty-four and Annie forty-three, and they were well-established financially, they commissioned Samuel Wyatt, of the well-known family of architects, to design a small mansion, Heathfield, on Handsworth Common near Birmingham.[11] Both were keen to obtain value for money in building and furnishing the new house. Errors over measurements during building propelled the couple into an interventionist approach, drawing them together as partners in the project, consulting each other by letter (Watt often being in London fighting to protect his patents) about cost and choices of furniture, fabrics and colours. In 1791, for example, Annie informed James that Smallwood had a new carpet in, but 'if you can meet with one you like … you had better fix on it'.[12]

Central to the Watts' search for fabrics, furnishings and carpets was value, both in cost and quality. The effort involved is seen when James wrote: 'I have also had a day's travelling after bed furniture I have got patterns for you … it will take near 60 yds of yd wide for bed & window but have seen nothing for the parlour'.[13] He also bought household goods; in 1791 he advised Annie: 'I have bespoke your spices from Mr Jones, druggist, who has one of our engines and will get them of the best quality'.[14] Both husband and wife were involved in the domestic project; in 1792

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[11] H.W. Dickinson, *James Watt, Craftsman and Engineer* (Cambridge: CUP, 1935),160.

[12] Annie Watt to James Watt, 25 January 1791, MS 3219/4/6/12, BAH. Smallwood, like Hensman, the cabinet maker, was a prestigious Birmingham retailer.

[13] James Watt to Annie Watt, 10 March 1787, MS 3219/4/267A/5, BAH.

[14] James Watt to Annie Watt, 3 October 1789, MS 3219/4/268/7, BAH; Watt to Annie Watt, 26 January 1792, MS 3210/4/269/5.

she advised: ‘You will also write me if you have done anything about the Carpet if you have not I will take the one that Smallwood has got’. The main cause of delay in purchasing was their determination to get good value for money.[15] Although James may have ordered and paid for most of the goods he frequently followed his wife’s suggestions, showing that the presence of men’s names in tradesmen’s order books is not necessarily an indicator that decisions were mainly made by men, as Deborah Cohen has suggested. Rather, it reflected husbands’ legal responsibility for their wives’ debts.[16]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given their attention to detail and cost, the Watts spent five years furnishing the mansion. In May 1792 Annie congratulated her husband on his preliminary victory in Parliament over his patents, and then asked him to find bell handles: ‘I am told there are some pretty Light ones of Tunbridge ware which I think can not be very dear’.[17] Although, as design historian Clive Edwards has shown, there was ‘a rapidly growing disposition to buy goods for the home’, the example of Annie Watt strongly suggests that account has to be taken, when considering consumption choices of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of differences among the middle classes based on religion, upbringing and taste, as Barker has acknowledged. Many, like Annie Watt, especially those of

[15] Annie Watt to James Watt, 30 January 1792, MS 3219/4/6/13, BAH.

[16] Cohen, *Household Gods,* 92-3; Amy Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1997, first published 1993), 100.

[17] Annie Watt to James Watt, 6 May 1792, MS 3219/4/6/41, BAH. Tunbridge Ware was decoratively inlaid woodwork.

lower-middle class origins, put prudence before ostentatious display.[18] For example, she turned her hand to varnishing tables in 1792, requesting the ratio of Copal oil to turpentine from Watt, 'as what you mixed is nearly done.' Such efforts were part of her contribution to a household that prided itself on controlling expenditure.[19]

Throughout their marriage the Watts had shared a concern over financial matters. In 1780 James had written to Annie that the son of friends had become bankrupt. He described in horror how they had been forced to go into lodgings, leaving their house and belongings to creditors 'except their absolute wearing apparel'. He concluded: 'This is the consequence of high living and luxury – lead us not into Temptation!' [20] Annie was also quick to complain about his son James' extravagance as he adopted French fashions in clothes: 'You must either be his Master or he will be yours'.[21] In 1789, when they were embarking on building Heathfield, James shared his 'uneasiness' about a threatened law suit, saying: 'I fear nothing so much as lawsuits'.[22] Despite his wealth, he lived in perpetual fear of financial failure. Nevertheless, he seemed to enjoy choosing fabrics and

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[18] Clive Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings.* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 155.

[19] Annie Watt to James Watt, 6 May 1792, MS 3219/4/6/41, BAH.

[20] James Watt to Annie Watt, 27 February 1780, MS 3219/4/267/8, BAH.

[21] Annie Watt to James Watt, 1 February 1785, MS B&W/M II/9/2, BAH.

[22] James Watt to Annie Watt, 29 August 1789, MS 3219/4/268, BAH.

furniture, suggesting, as Tosh has argued, that men too invested time and effort, as well as money, in the home.[23]

Hamlett, Logan and Grier agree that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, home furnishing increasingly became a way of communicating a set of values or were used as cultural signs and signifiers.[24] In Annie Watt's case, her new home represented James' and her values of quality, thrift and utility, also signifying her identity as a versatile manager. Anne Boulton's approach to setting up a new home, which is examined next, was very different, despite their broadly similar background and social milieu.

Good Taste

Anne Boulton was accustomed to living in comfort and some luxury. Her father, Matthew Boulton, was a successful entrepreneur who liked to live well. Her mother died suddenly from apoplexy in 1783 when Anne was fifteen; she increasingly took over her duties, eventually managing the household, as well as dealing with Boulton's correspondence. At the same time, she enjoyed an active social life in which she visited friends in London and elsewhere and entertained guests at home.[25] Boulton's will of 1806 instructed that Anne must have her own income to

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[23] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 50; see also: Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: masculine possession in the consumer revolution', *Social History* 25, no. 2 (2000).

[24] Hamlett, *Material Relations,* 32-3; Cohen, *Household Gods, 12, 24-5*; Grier, *Culture and Comfort,* 89.

[25] Shena Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter; Matthew Boulton and his 'Dear Girl'* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2005), 61-2.

'protect her from all Disputes with her Brother, who is not kindly disposed towards her'.[26] He left her enough to provide a net income of £1,000 a year and a carriage.

Anne and James Watt junior, childhood friends, later seem to have become close, but her biographer suggests that her brother may have obstructed the relationship, as he stood to benefit more from her will if she remained single, which she did. Following Matthew Boulton's death in 1809, apart from Anne's trust of £34,000, including a house, Thornhill, Handsworth, most of his £150,000 estate and the elegant family home, Soho House, Handsworth, went to his son Matthew. Anne became his housekeeper, but when he married, in 1817, she found the transition difficult as his wife took charge of the household. James Watt junior tried and failed to mediate between Matthew, his wife and Anne, reporting 'a scene of great violence' to his father in October 1818, but was clearly unsuccessful: in December 1818, at the age of fifty, Anne Boulton left Soho House for good.[27] She moved to Thornhill House, and, as her father had always done, engaged designers to redecorate and refurnish. The £1,000 annual income had grown to between £2,000 and £5,000 a year, so designers were affordable as well as being an appropriate way for a single woman to avoid dealing directly with tradesmen and haggling over prices.[28]

Setting up home independently for the first time in her life, Boulton may well have decided to be extravagant. Her bills for 1818/19 reveal the enormity of the task.

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[26] Matthew Boulton to Ambrose Weston, 10 April 1806, MS 3782/13/48/155, BAH.

[27] James Watt junior to James Watt, 2 October 1818, MS 3219/4/37/39, BAH; Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter*, 141-8, 158-9.

[28] Ibid., 137, 171-2.

The three-storey house was taxed on thirty-five windows, so was substantial.[29] It was to cater not only for Boulton, but also for anticipated guests; Anne intended to maintain the comfortable standard of living she had always enjoyed. The logistics were certainly demanding, one bill alone running to eighty-seven items of crockery, tin ware and general kitchen utensils.[30] An estimate of £139 18s from London supplier Wellsted for a twelve-seater dining table and furniture suggests that Boulton sought quality furniture and intended to entertain generously.[31] For the rooms earmarked for entertaining she engaged firstly designer Cornelius Dixon, and then rising London cabinet maker Richard Bridgens, who also worked on Aston Hall for James Watt junior.[32] While Annie Watt maintained a prudent, some might say parsimonious, attitude towards her project, Boulton indicated, with high quality furniture and soft furnishings, not only her class and status, but also her new independence, having none of the financial worries that faced so many never-married women.

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[29] Anne Bouton's tax schedule for year ending 5 April 1830, MS 3782/14/83/15, BAH.

[30] Edward Baker to Miss Boulton, account 28 November 1818 to 2 March 1819, MS 3782/14/20/1/20, BAH.

[31] Mr Wellsted to Miss Boulton, estimate for sundry furniture, 13 November 1819, MS 3782/14/83/11, BAH.

[32] Ponsonby, *Stories from Home,* 27-30; Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter*, 171-4, Oliver Fairclough, *The Grand Old Mansion: The Holtes and their successors at Aston Hall 1618-1864* (Birmingham: BMAG, 1984), 109.

Boulton, perhaps conscious of the need to choose tastefully, enlisted the help of James Watt junior when purchasing expensive items; his friend Tufnell provided a comprehensive list of reputable London furniture suppliers.[33] Boulton's London purchases included rosewood card tables at eighteen guineas from Gillow and carpets from Rickards of Finsbury Square for £47, including a highly fashionable Brussels carpet. She also patronised Birmingham businesses, purchasing silver plate from Boulton, and fabrics from draper Richard Cadbury.[34] Large amounts of china and glass were ordered; her main supplier, Mary Rollason, is listed in the Wedgwood archives as a buyer, an indication that she was a supplier of quality goods.[35] Boulton was particularly attached to her porcelain desert service, which was always washed up under supervision, and came from H. & R. Chamberlain's

[33] Memorandum undated, MS 3782/14/83/19, BAH.

[34] Gillow & Co., to Miss Boulton, bill October 1821, MS 3782/14/22/1/15; Rickards to Miss Boulton, bill 30 November 1821, MS 3782/14/22/1/39; M. Boulton & Plate Co., to Miss Boulton, bill, 30 December 1820 to 17 August 1821, MS 3782/14/22/1/26; Richard Cadbury to Miss Boulton, 1 May 1821, MS 3782/14/22/1/13; BAH.

[35] Bill from Mary Rollason, to Miss Boulton, two square shoulder decanters, 28 June 1821 MS 3782/14/22/1/24, BAH; For dealing with Wedgwoods see: H-R, Box 47 Documents 8554-8597, Wedgwood Archive, Barlaston; Christine Wiskin, 'Women, Finance and Credit in England, c. 1780-1826*',* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2000), 170.

Worcester Porcelain, New Bond Street Showroom, London, costing £9 12s.[36] With the experience already gained as housekeeper to her father, she furnished her house to a sophisticated standard, as existing water-colour drawings of the soft furnishings demonstrate.[37] Through her engagement with material culture in the refurbishing of her house, Boulton arguably sought to shape a new identity for herself as an independent woman of taste. It is useful to compare two inventories, one of Heathfield, dated 1791-2, written in Annie Watt's hand,[38] and the other a list of the furniture at Thornhill, most traceable, according to Mason, through Anne's bills and the contents auction following her death.[39] Comparing the main bedroom in each house is instructive: The White Room at Heathfield and the Thornhill 'Front Chamber, S.E. next the Road'. Beds and curtains, chests and washstands, carpets and ewers are similar in description, with a mixture of good mahogany and fashionable hand-painted furniture. The main difference lay in the portable possessions. Although minimal utility china and glass items suggest the Watts were in residence when the inventory was taken, the room was otherwise bereft of personal portable items. Of course, the equipping of the house may have been incomplete, or Watt may have chosen not to record such items, although that too suggests that she accorded them little importance. Grier has suggested that small

[36] Bill from H & R Chamberlain to Anne Boulton, 13 December 1820, MS 3782/14/21/63, BAH; Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter*, 173.

[37] Ibid.,174 and plates 59-61.

[38] Inventory of Heathfield House, 1791-1792, MS 3219/4/238, BAH.

[39] Undated list of Thornhill rooms and their contents, MS 3782/14/83/3, BAH; Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter*, 170, 177-8.

personal material objects 'communicated details of a family's particular character within that setting', in which case, Watt's house would have said little about her.[40]

There is, furthermore, other evidence of Annie Watt's restrained approach to material comfort. The Lunar Society men and their families often socialised together (see Appendix 3). Mary Anne Galton, later Mrs Schimmelpenninck, noted in her memoir her frequent visits to the Watts' house as a child, where Annie Watt supervised 'in the thrifty … habits of the most enlightened Scotch housewifery', and recalled that even their little pug dogs were trained to wipe their feet. Mary Anne's niece Elizabeth Galton (later Wheler) also paid visits as a child with her grandfather to drink tea with Annie, then an elderly widow. She observed that 'Everything was in perfect order, not a leaf to be seen on the lawn'.[41] These eye-witness accounts concur with the inventory in revealing Annie Watt's concern for good value, order and simplicity.

In contrast, the presence of portable items at Thornhill, especially glass and china, suggest that Boulton considered such items important for setting up a beautiful home to reflect her feminine identity.[42] This importance is often represented, Ponsonby argues, in the wills of widows and spinsters where 'the division of goods often took a more personal form'. Such goods, as Berg has suggested, could be 'a

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[40] Grier, *Culture and Comfort,* 91.

[41] Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck,* edited by Christiana C. Hankin, 2 Vols (London: Longman, 1858), 1:341-2; Andrew Moilliet, editor, *Elizabeth Anne Galton* (1808-1906): *A Well-connected Gentlewoman* (Northwich: Léonie Press, 2003), 44-5.

[42] For Bills 1819-1821 see Papers of Anne Boulton, MS 3782/14/20-21, BAH.

statement of the emotional quality of connections to particular relatives and friends'.[43] Anne's will suggests this: to Annie Watt, her 'much esteemed friend' she left: 'a piece of plate or any other article she may prefer in remembrance of AB to the value of three hundred guineas'. She understood Annie Watt's plain taste sufficiently to let her choose the item which would best preserve the memory of their friendship. To her niece, Katherine Boulton, she left 'the Indian shawl given to her by her father and "the small gold repeater belonging to my dear Mother"'.[44]

According to contemporary didactic writers, such home building also signified a woman's virtue and morality, making the selection of furnishing and ornaments especially significant for those never-married women who wished to project identities as respectable middle-class women.[45] Boulton, for example, bought the Chamberlain porcelain desert service, but declined an extravagant matching centre piece offered for £15 12s. She did, however, purchase a large tea service for £18 18s 6d: the tea table was respectable femininity, whereas a centre piece

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[43] Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, 95; Maxine Berg, 'Women's Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History* 30 no. 2 (1996): 420; See also: Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London: YUP, 1999).

[44] Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter, 194.*

[45] Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Women of England*, *Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (New York: Langley, 1843, first published 1839),10; Cohen, *Household Gods*, 13, 23-4.

might have suggested feminine excess.[46] David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby argue that 'singlehood was problematic' in the long eighteenth century, in a society predicated upon 'the primacy of marriage and family'.[47] This could leave single households and, by implication, single householders, suspect both emotionally and morally. Wealth could provide some protection, but single women especially could be subject to close monitoring by family, friends and the wider community, sometimes to excess.[48]

Anne Boulton's companion and friend, Amelia Alston, wrote from London in 1820 to Anne's brother Matthew, he and Anne were again on friendly terms, reporting that Anne had interviewed a suitable cook for his family. She then mentioned a social engagement, adding dryly: 'We meet the Drummonds, when the meeting will consist of *one* half Dozen *Spinsters*'.[49] Amelia's italicised reference to spinster-only company suggests that she and Anne Boulton were aware of single women's ambiguous position in society. Such an engagement with what Mary Jean Corbett

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[46] Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter,* 173-4*;* Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, 229-233, 245; for discussions on the tea table and china as a trope for femininity see: Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 52-69.

[47] Hussey and Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker,* 30-1, 51, 201-03.

[48] See, for example, William Gladstone's controlling behaviour towards his sister, Helen, in Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations 1780-1920* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 250-80.

[49] Amelia Alston to Matthew Boulton, 18 September 1820 in Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter*, 190.

describes as the discourse of femininity, in this case a light-hearted but intentional emphasis on women-only friendships, may also have been intended to deflect Matthew Boulton's attention from their frequent absences in London, Bath and other fashionable leisure towns.[50] One possible motive for Boulton's reconciliation with her brother may have been a recognition that a return to his social circle would offer protection against gossip concerning her status as a single female head of household.

Anne Boulton stepped out alone in middle age in 1818 to create a new life for herself and achieved this through her status as a wealthy upper-middle-class woman, a status which protected her reputation in dealing with designers and suppliers as well as hiring and training staff and entertaining guests. She also took care to maintain a respectable reputation by keeping a substantial household of servants, including menservants to ensure the security of the house, and was always accompanied by a servant when she went away.[51] Using the knowledge of material culture gained in her father's house Anne Boulton, understanding the relevance of domestic material culture to her identity and status, carefully created a new home for herself. She also took the opportunity to travel frequently to the capital and elite spa towns such as Bath and Cheltenham with her close friend Amelia Alston. All of this she was able to do because of her financial independence; an independence which eluded many other women of her class.

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[50] Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Autobiographies* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), 15.

[51] Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter*, 163-67, 191.

In contrast, status and show were of little importance to Annie Watt. The furniture and furnishing at Heathfield reflected her identity as an efficient and frugal manager, as well as her husband's financial prudence. Both women set out to create new homes in their middle-age. They possessed very different personalities, belonged to different generations and lived different lives, albeit within the same milieu, and the resulting homes they created would have looked and felt very different. What they shared, however, was a determination to demonstrate their competence in the successful planning and execution of their projects, as well as a clear awareness of the role homemaking and domestic material culture played in signifying their identities as capable, independent women.

Catherine Hutton (1757-1846)

Catherine Hutton, like Anne Boulton, took on early responsibility. Her mother Sarah developed asthma in 1779 and Catherine gradually assumed the household duties.[52] In childhood she attended a private day school in Birmingham where, with much attention paid to dancing and plain and ornamental needlework, she found that, 'Little was there to learn, and that little was easily learned'. She wished to join her friends at boarding school, but her father, William Hutton, refused, fearing for her health. In compensation, in about 1767, Catherine wrote, he gave her a 'handsome chest of drawers; one draw, by my especial order, being fitted up as a

[52] Catherine Hutton, editor, *The Life of William Hutton, F.A.S.S. including a particular account of the Riots at Birmingham in 1791* (London: Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1816, Reprint, Birmingham: Brewin 1998), 63.

writing desk'.[53] A prolific letter-writer from an early age, she used her desk --- constantly until July 1791, when it was destroyed.

William Hutton had arrived in Birmingham from Nottingham in 1750 with little but some old books, successfully building up a prosperous business as a bookseller, later adding a circulating library and a stationery business. He also invested in land and built a country house, Bennett's Hill, in 1769. He became a commissioner of the Birmingham Court of Requests in 1772 and wrote the first published history of Birmingham in 1783.[54] Their town house adjoined the business in the busy High Street, where Presbyterian William Hutton mixed with the commercial and professional men of the town, many of whom were also Nonconformists, though he kept apart from political and religious controversy. The Hutton children, Catherine and Thomas, enjoyed a prosperous upbringing which later included trips to the theatre, dances and visits to London. The following discussion focuses on how Catherine Hutton experienced and expressed her identity through material culture, questions why ownership of material objects, and conversely, their loss, meant so much to her, and explores the strategies she subsequently adopted to rebuild her life.

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[53] Catherine Hutton Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century: Letters of Catherine Hutton*, (hereafter *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*) (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1891), 4.

[54] Elrington, C. R. 2013 "Hutton, William (1723–1815), historian." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-14317; accessed 29 Jul. 2018

Provincial Life

In 1846 at the age of eighty-nine, Hutton listed her material accomplishments, including needlework: 'Shirts for my father and brother, and all sorts of wearing apparel for myself … furniture for beds'. She had embroidered and netted purses, often given as presents to men she respected, including Charles Dickens, thus publicly affirming her feminine talent.[55] Maureen Daley Goggin suggests that 'because materiality mediates social relations, it plays a crucial role in identity performance'.[56] A photograph in Audrey Duggan's biography of Hutton shows a plain shirt made by Catherine for her father.[57] In creating it Hutton can be said to have sewn her identity into the fabric. The Huttons could afford to pay to have their plain-sewing done, but by making shirts for her father and brother Hutton performed a gendered role as the dutiful daughter, providing comfortable clothing for the men of the family, in line with representations of 'correct female behaviour' portrayed in old copies of the *Spectator*, *Tatler* and *Guardian.* These emphasised femininity and gentility, and she had read them avidly as a young girl in her father's bookshop.[58] As Judith Spicksley argues, 'such representations of identity

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[55] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman,* 213-5.

[56] Maureen Daley Goggin, 'Fabricating Identity: Janie Terrero's 1912 Embroidered English Suffrage Signature Handkerchief', in *Women and Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies*, edited by Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 19.

[57] Audrey Duggan, *A Lady of Letters: Catherine Hutton 1757-1846* (Studley: Brewin, 2000), Plate 2.

[58] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman,* 5.

in the public domain frequently operated *as if* identity were fixed', leading many individuals to perceive themselves and others in that way.[59]

The Huttons lived comfortably but modestly; William and his son collected valuable books and prints, and Catherine collected written music and, like Anne Boulton, prints of costumes. Both indicated her strong interest in material culture and were signifiers of gentility and femininity. Among William Hutton's friends and associates was Joseph Priestley, teacher, natural philosopher, and rational dissenting minister at New Meeting, Birmingham from 1780.[60] Catherine, at twenty-three 'weary of Calvinistical monotony and nonsense' from their local minister, joined Priestley's congregation, as did her brother. She described his preaching as amiable and his character, as a philosopher, great.[61] Many members of the Lunar Society were friends of Hutton's and, like Samuel Galton and Priestley, often visited his home, where Catherine played hostess, serving tea. By such means she conversed with many of these men, including Priestley, yet she emphasised that she 'took care not to display the little knowledge I possessed; I wished to be

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[59] Judith Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations: Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the "Spinster" in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Identity and Agency*, 129.

[60] Schofield, Robert E. 2013 "Priestley, Joseph (1733–1804), theologian and natural philosopher." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22788; accessed 27 Jul. 2018.

[61] Catherine Hutton to Mrs Coltman, 1781, in Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman,* 28-9.

loved; and I was convinced that to be thought superior was not the way to be loved.[62]

Catherine thus conformed to what Gleadle identifies as the 'relational tropes of femininity' of the period, and the 'processes of socialization which emphasized female duties of caring and subservience'.[63] She served her family, never married and nursed both parents and, moreover, she emulated her father much in the same way that Catherine Marsh did hers, as seen in Chapter 2. Gleadle suggests that for many women in her study, 'the collective familial identity was particularly prominent'. It offered a safe option and some empowerment, although it could potentially marginalize women's voices.[64] Catherine Hutton could be said to have adopted this form of identity, especially in her earlier years. In addition to her father's circle of friends and acquaintances, she also benefitted from the attention of her mother's cultured friend, Elizabeth Coltman of Leicester, who guided her literary reading and critical thinking.[65] As her mother, Sarah Hutton, did not go into company a young neighbour, Mrs Richards, introduced Catherine to provincial society and taught her to play cards and the guitar. Catherine thus acquired the feminine social accomplishments of dancing, manners and an eye for fashion, as well as a musical talent and interest in literature, developed at home, and an

[62] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman,* 8.

[63] Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens,* 120-22.

[64] Ibid.*, 120-22.*

[65] Duggan, *A Lady of Letters*, 20.

increasing knowledge of current affairs, provided through the medium of her collective familial identity.[66]

The 1791 Birmingham Riot

Catherine Hutton's daily life was suddenly disrupted on 14 July 1791, when a riot began. Her letters, written during and after the Birmingham riots, stripped of polite veneer, provide vivid descriptions in lucid, journalistic style. According to R.B. Rose, the origins of the riot were complex: 'To the Anglican and Tory they were a spontaneous gesture of patriotic indignation against "traitorous and disloyal elements"'; to the Whig and Dissenter 'an anticipation of the national reaction of 1792-3 in which Authority allowed the mob licence to eradicate struggling liberalism in the name of Church and King.'[67] The activities of some radical Dissenters prior to the riot were seen by many, including Catherine Hutton, as having been provocative. She wrote: I look upon Dr Priestley as a good man … but though unintentionally … he was, I think, one of the primary causes of the riot in Birmingham, by rousing the spirit of bigotry and all uncharitableness in others'.[68] She was alluding to his campaign for the repeal of the Test Act, and his ill-chosen words in a sermon in 1785, using the imagery of the Gunpowder Plot. Speaking

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[66] For collective and individual identity see, for example, French and Barry, *Identity and Agency*; Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008, first published 1996).

[67] R.B. Rose, 'The Priestley Riots of 1791', *Past & Present* 18, (1960): 68.

[68] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 25 August 1791, in Catherine Hutton, *A Narrative of the Riots in Birmingham, July 1791* (hereafter *A Narrative*) edited by Catherine Hutton Beale (Birmingham: White and Pike, c.1875), 24.

metaphorically but taken literally he declared: 'We … are … laying gunpowder … under the old building of error and superstition', which some Anglicans saw as a threat.[69] The catalyst for the riot was a dinner at a Birmingham hotel held on Bastille Day, which Nonconformists with republican sympathies were expected to attend. Priestley invited William Hutton, but he declined, saying: 'I wish well to liberty everywhere, but public dinners are out of my way'. Priestley also stayed away.[70]

On 14 July 1791 a crowd gathered to throw stones at the hotel. Incited by members of the town's conservative King and Country Society, disorder quickly spread.[71] The mob went on to target the homes and businesses of the wealthier Nonconformists. Three magistrates, strongly suspected of sympathising with the mob's intentions, declined to call out the militia for three days; by the time they arrived on 17 July, nine people were dead and many injured. In addition, Priestley's house, laboratory and scientific papers had been destroyed, and four meeting houses and twenty-seven substantial houses, including William Hutton's two houses and his warehouse, had been looted, damaged or destroyed.[72] Catherine and her mother, at Bennett's Hill, fled for their lives as the mob advanced. Bennett's Hill was eventually razed to the ground, some of the looters

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[69] Duggan, *A Lady of Letters*, 78-9. The Test Act required the taking of the Anglican sacrament to qualify for most public offices, effectively excluding committed non-conformists.

[70] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 21 July 1791, in A *Narrative,* 5-6.

[71] For an analysis of the riot see: Rose, 'The Priestley Riots'.

[72] Uglow *The Lunar Men,* 445.

being neighbours and servants. Catherine took charge of her mother's safety, making daily arrangements for transport and lodgings; moving frequently to keep ahead of the mob, they were occasionally refused shelter. The two women were at an inn at Castle Bromwich when a mob arrived looking for Presbyterian fugitives. For two hours they hid in a bedroom, holding on to their drunken coachman to prevent him giving them away.[73]

By 21 July 1791 Hutton had written a first lengthy account of the riots to her London friend Mrs André, telling her: 'For some days I had nothing in the world but the clothes I wore; the rest of my apparel, my money, my letters, my papers, my prints, and my music were gone.'[74] In the stress of the situation, Catherine gives a catalogue of her lost material world which is in striking contrast to her earlier letters, and shows the depth of her attachment to favourite possessions. These material objects had expressed her identity and that of her family: her books and music were signifiers of her intellect, her father's financial means and her leisure to pursue such interests, all confirming her middle-class status, but now the family were homeless. She concluded: 'I did not intend to write so much, but I have taken one sheet of paper after another and knew not where to leave off.'[75]

William Hutton also wrote an account of the riot and observed: 'How thin the barriers between affluence and poverty!'[76] He was articulating the ever-present fear of the middle class: the prospect of failure or calamity leading to destitution. In

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[73]Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 21 July 1791, in *A Narrative,* 15-17.

[74] Ibid., 21 July 1791, in *A Narrative,* 19-20.

[75] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 21 July 1791, in *A Narrative,* 20.

[76] Hutton, *The Life of William Hutton*, 77-107.

another letter to Mrs André dated 25 August 1791, Catherine describes how someone rescued some of her family's possessions during the riot. She says: 'I went there, and among broken chairs and sofas I found some welcome bundles of linen; most welcome to me, for no part of my apparel had been changed during our troubles. Everything was marked with dirt or blood, the tokens of the danger it had escaped.' By this last phrase, Catherine culturally redefines the role of the linen to that of a surrogate, which anthropologist Igor Kopytoff called 'the social biography of things;' the linen, rather than the family, had been subjected to the danger they may otherwise have experienced.[77] This description articulated Hutton's relationship with material ownership which the riot destroyed. Thanking Mrs André for her offer to purchase clothes and goods, but declining to accept, Hutton wrote: 'at present we want neither, for we have no necessity to wear one, or place to put the other. I have never, since I knew my own wants, wanted so little as now that I have scarcely anything; the reason is that I do not go from home.'[78] As Woodruff Smith argues, 'respectable people were properly dressed', both in public or private.[79] Clothes were a manifestation of status, and important for differentiating the respectable from those lower down the social scale. Here, Hutton displayed the family's loss of self-esteem, unable to stir themselves to

[77] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 25 August 1791, in *A Narrative,* 26; Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', in *The Social Life of Things*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: CUP, 1986, Reprint, 2011), 68.

[78] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 25 August 1791, in *A Narrative, 27.*

[79] Smith, *Consumption,* 210-11.

attend to their appearance, normally an essential for respectability, in private as well as public.

The same letter details the damage done to the town properties: 'The rioters demolished all the doors, windows, chimney- pieces, wainscots, skirting boards, and bannisters, together with the roof … They then began upon the stairs and tore up about six; but found this work far more laborious and less amusing, than setting a house in a blaze, and they desisted.'[80] The neighbours, in self-preservation, prevented the town house from being burned. Arjun Appadurai, describing the added value that commodities acquire for plunderers, concludes that commodities acquire added value when looted from their customary habitats, but it could be argued that those who retrieve such objects also endow them with added value.[81] This is demonstrated when Catherine first revisited her ruined garden at Bennett's Hill. She retrieved three easily replaceable common plants, 'planted them in pots... and considered them as the foundation of a future garden'.[82] The town house was later re-built, but Catherine Hutton never lived there permanently again, writing in 1792: 'I have for ever quitted Birmingham as a home, and I hate it so fervently that I scarcely go to it above once a month.'[83] She preferred the seclusion of Bennett's Hill, living in a small cottage until the country house was rebuilt, to which she then returned to care for her increasingly frail mother. William Hutton and the other victims finally received compensation through the courts; having lost £8,243, he

[80] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 25 August 1791, in *A Narrative, 21-2*.

[81] Appadurai, 'Introduction' in *The Social Life of Things*, 28.

[82] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 23 October 1791, in Beale, *Reminiscences,* 96.

[83] Ibid., 2 September 1792, Ibid., 111

claimed £6,736 and received £5,390, allowing the family to begin the slow task of reconstructing their lives.[84]

At the age of eighty-three, Catherine still recalled her most treasured objects, lost in the riot. She described the chest her father had given her as a child, with one drawer fitted up as a writing-desk at her request. She wrote: 'This chest *was my own* till July 1791, when, with its contents, which consisted of many clothes, many papers, and a good sum of money, it was destroyed by the rioters.'[85] The emphasised 'was my own' reminds us of her single status, and what that meant for her. Even though she lived in some affluence, she made clear that these were the only objects that she considered to be *her own*. As Beverly Lemire notes, writing of textiles and clothing, 'the garments that draped the body, protecting, adorning and negotiating its place in society are ambassadors from the past'.[86] As Hutton's reaction to her loss shows, this is no less true of a piece of favourite furniture: invested with history; with secrets and with possibilities; carrying irreplaceable tactile memories and hopes of the owner. The chest, furthermore, contained her writing, signifying her intellect and a future means of earning a living, her clothes, identifying her as a member of the middle classes, and her money, signifying her ability to control her own finances. Until July 1791, the chest was the object

[84] Hutton, *The Life of William Hutton*, 111-2.

[85] Beale, *Reminiscences*, 4-5.

[86] Beverly Lemire, 'Draping the Body and Dressing the Home: The Material Culture of Textiles and Clothes in the Atlantic World, c. 1500-1800', in *History and Material Culture*, edited by Karen Harvey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 93.

protecting and symbolising her status. At the age of eighty-three she still mourned its loss

Travelling

In 1796 William took Catherine on a trip to Wales. As Edmund Burke's work on the sublime in nature began to influence British poetry, and European unrest limited overseas travel, interest grew in visiting wild and inaccessible places in Britain, including Wales.[87] The Huttons' journey to Barmouth via Shrewsbury, following the footsteps of other travellers in search of the sublime, was a successful attempt by William to restore Catherine's health following the death of her mother earlier that year.

The family had taken holidays in Wales since 1787 but had travelled by carriage when Sarah Hutton accompanied them. Although some elite women were travelling to remote places, gender conventions demanded that respectable middle-class women were chaperoned and, increasingly, that they travelled by carriage.[88] In 1796, however, William Hutton and Catherine travelled by

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[87] Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Newton Stewart: Anodos, 2018, first published 1756), For Burke see also Chapter 5 of this thesis. Duncan Heath and Judy Boreham, *Romanticism: A Graphic Guide* (London: Icon, 1999), 53.

[88] Gillian Beattie-Smith, 'Writing the Self: The Journal of Sarah Stoddart Hazlitt, 1774-1843', *Women's History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 204; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 286. See also: Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, editors, *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (Manchester: MUP, 2002), 2-3; Liz Pitman,

horseback, she without a maid, riding pillion behind a groom.[89] Davidoff and Hall suggest that the 'growing emphasis on the protection of women', meant social derogation increasingly awaited women who rode on horseback, other than for recreation. Riding pillion was usually limited to family members; riding with a groom was deemed a serious breach of proprieties because of the physical contact involved. Hutton was aware of her social breach, but was unrepentant, explaining:

> This obsolete way of travelling gained us little consideration at English inns; but in Wales, where riding was a matter of course among women we were highly respected. For ourselves, we had an unobstructed view of vale and mountain, rock and river, which charmed us.[90]

Shirley Foster and Sara Mills in *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* identify different types of 'lady travellers' of the period, including the 'missionaries, settlers or pioneers' who travelled from necessity, as well as those who chose to travel for leisure, as explorers or tourists.[91] Catherine fell into the latter category, but her accounts of her travels in Wales and the north of England had strong elements of singularity, danger and privation to them, in contrast to the material comfort she depicted as lost following the riots. Out of those visits, recorded in letters to her

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Pigsties and Paradise: Lady Diarists and the Tour of Wales 1795-1860 (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2009).

[89] Duggan, *A Lady of Letters*, 51.

[90] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 117; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 285-6.

[91] Foster and Mills, *An Anthology*, 2-3. See also: Pitman, *Pigsties and Paradise*.

brother Thomas, came an early published work, the serialized ‘Letters written during a Tour in North Wales’ in *The Monthly Magazine*, whose vitality and immediacy eclipsed the stiff formality of her later fiction. [92] The Huttons, she explained, carried their own and the horses’ food in remote areas because inns often had few supplies to sell.[93] At Bishop’s Castle, according to Hutton, the inn floor ‘was of brick, our fire was to be lighted; our supper was a pint of sherry made into a posset, and our beds as hard as the floors of the rooms we occupied’.[94] The roads, or rather tracks, could be rough and dangerous, especially over mountains, and the danger of robbery was real. Hutton demonstrates here, as elsewhere, a talent for economic but immediate description. Leonie Hannan has discussed how letter-writing bridged geographical and physical separation between the writer and reader; Hutton’s creative talent later extended this bridge to her public readers, allowing them to share the danger and privation as well as the indelible beauty that Hutton conveyed.[95]

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[92] Catherine Hutton, ‘Letters written during a Tour in North Wales’, (1796 to 1799) serialised in *The Monthly Magazine* (June 1815-Sep 1818).

[93] Catherine Hutton to Thomas Hutton, July 1787, in Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman* 47.

[94] Ibid., 44. Posset: boiled milk with added wine.

[95] Leonie Hannan, ‘Making Space: English women, Letter-Writing, and the Life of the Mind, c.1650-1750’, in *Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn*, edited by Kathryne Beebe and Angela Davis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 78-9.

In 1801, William, then seventy-seven, and Catherine Hutton travelled north; William Hutton walked ahead, Catherine again rode pillion behind their groom.[96] At Penrith Catherine was left unchaperoned for five days while William walked to Hadrian's Wall alone, a considerable breach of convention. Letters to her brother reveal these travels north and into Wales to have been invigorating acts of trespass into the wilderness, spaces deemed off-limits to respectable women because of the isolation and danger and, at Penrith, with only the groom for protection. Her descriptive powers conjured up for the reader the dangers and privations encountered in isolated countryside, in a very different tone from the material losses of the riots. Hutton enjoyed writing in dialect which, Beattie Smith suggests, 'functions to perform signs of otherness'. She included this journey in her father's biography, *A Life of William Hutton* (1816), which she edited.[97] Richard Sha argues that women of the Romantic period permeated the gender boundaries around artful expression by restricting themselves to the feminine art of visual and verbal sketching. He suggests that whereas painting was a masculine art, sketching was seen as a pale, miniaturised, feminine imitation, posing no threat to masculine sensibilities.[98] Hutton's keen eye and mimicry sometimes led to a recounting of experiences normally considered too indelicate for a woman to write about, but her use of brief sketches brought them permissibly and powerfully to life. This form of travel, with its contrast to her more restricted life at home,

[96] Hutton, *The Life of William Hutton*, 123-5; Duggan, *A Lady of Letters*, 51-2.

[97] Hutton, *Ibid.*, 121-125; Beattie-Smith, 'Writing the Self', 205.

[98] Richard Sha, *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 1998), 105-113.

arguably offered Catherine brief periods of independence and provided new opportunities for literary self-expression.

Some ninety years later, in 1891, Catherine's editor and distant relative, Catherine Hutton Beale, member of the leading legal and commercial Beale family of Birmingham, could not admit to such social contraventions; she bowdlerised the record Catherine had written, inventing a carriage, removing the pillion riding and providing chaperones for Hutton.[99] The one uncensored visit she retained was to a slave ship in Liverpool. Hutton's letter to her brother records her going below to inspect the slave hold:

> It shocked my soul to see the narrow space in which so many unfortunate people had been crammed together. The man who showed us the vessel seemed not inclined to unfold the mysteries of his calling; but, in answer to my enquiries, he owned that the slaves were naked and chained together.[100]

One explanation for Beale including the detail relating to the nakedness of slaves may have been a desire to enhance the moral and Christian reputation of her relative, or, perhaps the reputation of her own family by association. In 1891, when the *Reminiscences* were published, British missionary work was at its height. Hutton's undertones of sexual transgression in her exchange with the slave-master would therefore have been tolerated far more than her unchaperoned

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[99] Compare Hutton's account in *The Life of William Hutton*, 121-5 with that of Beale, *Reminiscences*, 131-3.

[100] Catherine Hutton to Thomas Hutton, 12 July 1801, in Beale, *Reminiscences,* 131-3.

pillion travel would ever have been, bizarrely, perhaps, to modern readers. Such contradictions reflect the uneven progress of female emancipation in some Victorian households in the nineteenth century described by Mary Poovey and others.[101]

Catherine Hutton was a single woman who valued her credentials as a respectable middle-class woman. She emphasised her material accomplishments, a severe loss to her because of the Birmingham riots, and at the same time challenged the boundaries of domestic femininity with her travels, which stressed hardship and frugality. It might be argued that when hemmed in by responsibility at home, she employed her needlework and feminine accomplishments as cultural currency with which to purchase her other life on the road. In this way she could, while her father lived, enjoy brief periods in which she could act with autonomy, explore spaces not generally visited by women and, in using the permissible context of artistic licence, could incorporate all this in her writing, later forging an identity as an independent woman of letters.

Elizabeth Anne Wheler (née Galton) (1808-1906)

In 1838, thirty-year-old Elizabeth Anne Galton wrote to her parents, giving a vivid account of her attendance at Queen Victoria's coronation in Westminster Abbey

[101] See: Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London: Virago 1989, first published 1988); Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water;* Barbara Caine, *Destined to be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

earlier that day.[102] She wore a new pink satin dress, a present from her parents; 'ornaments' lent to her by her Aunt Mary, with whom she was staying in Portman Square, and a new white bonnet, gloves and pink roses she had bought herself. Elizabeth was part of a wealthy and influential upper-middle-class family, as can be seen from the rich descriptions of the material culture of her world: the luxurious clothes, the London town house and the invitation itself, provided by the banker Hudson Gurney.

Elizabeth's extensive record of her life contains many references to the family's status, wealth and the cultured provincial and metropolitan upper-class circles in which they moved. Her father, for instance, became Deputy Lieutenant of Warwickshire in 1832. Her recall of these events suggests that her family's high social position and their luxurious material world had a lasting influence on her personal identity. As material culture scholars Susan Pearce, John Potvin and Alla Myselev argue, identity is not formed in isolation but in contact with the social, the material and the visual.[103] Elizabeth decided that the dress and accessories, 'after the honour they had of being at the Coronation' would be put away as heirlooms. She treated them as souvenirs, memorialising the day through material culture. As

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[102] Elizabeth Galton to her parents, 28 June 1838, in Elizabeth Anne Galton, 'A Young Lady from Birmingham: Some Early Reminiscences of Elizabeth Anne Galton, (Mrs Edward Wheler), (1808-1906)', 126-132, unpublished manuscript, MS1199, Birmingham Archives and Heritage (hereafter BAH).

[103] Potvin and Myzelev, *Material Cultures, 2;* Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005, first published 1995), 27.

Susan Stewart suggests: 'We need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable … The souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing … it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia'.[104]

Elizabeth would need access to moments of nostalgia in her life as it unfolded; her decision to marry a man without adequate means of support would separate her from her former lifestyle. Judith Spicksley argues that 'while abstract categories of social description had a prescriptive role in identity formation, the actions and behaviours of the individual within the local context also impacted on subjective and projected images of identity'.[105] This section thus examines how Elizabeth dealt with her reversal of fortune and questions the extent to which she managed to project an image of her identity that still reflected something of her former status. Elizabeth's father, Samuel Tertius Galton (1783-1844), had been a successful Quaker gun-maker and banker before retiring in 1831, when the family moved from Birmingham to Leamington, a growing provincial leisure town. His wife, Violetta Darwin (1783-1874), was the daughter of the wealthy doctor and scientist, Erasmus Darwin, mentioned in Chapter 1. These provincial Midland families, connected through the Lunar Society in the previous generation, were linked by intermarriages. Elizabeth's sister Lucy, for example, married James

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[104] Susan Stewart, *On Longing, Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press (hereafter DUP),1993), 135.

[105] Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations', 106.

Moilliet, the grandson of another Lunar Man, James Kier the chemist.[106] Samuel Tertius Galton, converted to Anglicanism, thus providing access to Cambridge University for his son Francis, as had his brother-in-law Robert Darwin for his son Charles.[107] Although Elizabeth could not attend University, her education was excellent and included maths, astronomy and natural science taught by her father – whom she described as a family peacemaker.[108] Unlike her paternal aunt, Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck (Chapters 1 and 5), Elizabeth described her childhood as happy. The Galtons spent holidays touring Britain or the continent, and every January held a ball for over one hundred guests; their lifestyle was fashionable, although discreet.[109] Their children were made aware of their position in life, absorbing early lessons on the value of cultural capital. Elizabeth recalled that 'we were always introduced as the granddaughters of Dr Erasmus Darwin … In London, we were received in the kindest manner by all the clever people, when

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[106] Uglow, *The Lunar Men;* Barbara and Hensleigh Wedgwood, editors, *The Wedgwood Circle 1730-1897: Four Generations of a Family and their Friends* (Ontario: Collier Macmillan, 1980).

[107] Francis Galton later received a knighthood and the Royal Society's Copley medal. Barbara M.D. Smith, 'The Galtons of Birmingham: Quaker Gun Merchants and Bankers, 1702-1831', *Business History* 9, no. 2 (1967),147; Nicolas Wright Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: OUP, 2001),37-46, 340-2.

[108] Moilliet, editor, *Elizabeth Anne Galton*, 21.

[109] Ibid., 79, 142.

they heard who we were, and they always noticed us whenever we met them'.[110] When Elizabeth's paternal grandfather, Samuel John Galton, described by Barbara Smith as 'the most successful business man of the Lunar Society', died in 1832, the wealth of Elizabeth's father more than doubled.[111] Elizabeth noted: 'My Father increased our allowances and we had more servants'.[112] Servants, which included a butler and a footman, clearly represented a suitable expenditure.

As former Quakers, education and philanthropy were part of the Galtons' social identity and from 1834 Elizabeth and her unmarried sisters Emma and Adele ran, with the help of a governess, a charity school in Leamington, built by their father.[113] This was the evangelical doctrine of the 'reformation of manners and morals' in action.[114] The pupils received an education reflecting middle-class values and were taught respect for their superiors. The girls were trained to be useful, literate servants, and at the end of their education spent two weeks in the elegant Galton home being supervised by the maids, 'who … turned them out tidy little servants', while the boys were trained by the Galton groom or footman.[115] Thus the social hierarchy was reinforced, perhaps more effectively than the

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[110]Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton*, 69.

[111] Smith, 'The Galtons of Birmingham', 150.

[112] Galton also received an income of £4,000 per annum from his inheritance: Smith, 'The Galtons', 150.

[113] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 102.

[114] David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (London: Harvard University Press,1964), 94.

[115] Galton,' Reminiscences', 102.

suburban regimes described by Jane Hamlett.[116] Although they persisted, unusually for that time, in teaching reading and arithmetic to all the children,[117] the Galton girls embraced gendered cultural conventions through their philanthropy, and upheld middle-class values, like their parents, in a way that was consonant with the Galton family being, as Elizabeth described it, one of 'the better families'.[118]

Changing Fortunes

As a young woman, Elizabeth had a wide circle of friends, including Catherine Marsh (Chapters 2 and 5); the Galtons attended William Marsh's Leamington church and the families socialised together.[119] Other friends included Emma Wheler and her brother, Edward (1798-1879). In 1839 Emma told Elizabeth that her brother had feelings for her, but he thought that, 'as he had not money to marry, he ought not to accept invitations to [the Galton] house'. Although the grandson of the 7th Baronet Wheler, Edward Wheler had no resources or profession. Always practical, Elizabeth told him 'we must try to forget it, that there must be no engagement', but added that she was 'much attached to him'.[120] There is no evidence that her father refused his permission to marry; it is more likely that Elizabeth had said nothing.

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[116] Galton,' Reminiscences', 102-104; Hamlett, *Material Relations,* 51-60.

[117] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 102-4.

[118] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton,* 18.

[119] L.E. O'Rorke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh* (London: Longmans, 1918), 30.

[120] Ibid., 137.

In March 1844, her father's asthma having weakened him, he trained Elizabeth to keep his extensive accounts. In October that year he died. In making her one of his executors, he recognised her financial proficiency. This she used to calculate that the income from her inheritance would produce an allowance of £500-600 a year.[121] Davidoff and Hall suggest that 'from £200 to £300 per annum secured a place in the middle class for an average family', but Elizabeth, having lived life in an upper-middle-class family, accustomed to a high standard of material comfort, considered an income twice that a challenge.[122] No details of Wheler's financial contribution to their marriage, nor criticism of the lack of it, is found in Elizabeth's memoir, which is perhaps unsurprising as it was intended as a record of the family's achievements for the younger members of the family.

The eldest son inherited Claverdon, the family estate, and he and his brothers received the bulk of the family fortune. The family town house was left to the mother and three unmarried daughters as tenants-in-common, the contents of the house to be shared between them.[123] As Elizabeth's mother was moving with Emma to Claverdon, she made a minimal selection before the sisters divided the 'the furniture, plate, pictures &c.' between them. Elizabeth wrote: 'The Furniture was very useful to Adele and me, as we were going to marry, and what we didn't

[121] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton,* 149, 152-154.

[122] These figures relate to the early nineteenth century. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 23.

[123] Will of Samuel Tertius Galton, made 2 January 1841, proved 29 November 1844, Canterbury PRO, PROB 11/2007/225, The National Archives (hereafter TNA).

want, Emma sold.' The house was let, providing additional income.[124] The word 'useful' highlights the transition to their new, utilitarian lives, as did the practical decision to let the house. The one unresolved item was their father's portrait: 'We were all very anxious to have my dear Father's picture, so drew lots for it and it fell to Emma'. Portraits had, as Ponsonby demonstrates, special associations such as lineage, memorialisation, status and were 'symbolic of permanence in the material culture of the home'. Marcia Pointon has analysed the power of portraiture. She points to Jean-Paul Sartre's phrase 'expressive likeness' as 'something that acts seemingly magically even when the subject is dead; or, as we might now say, the issue of resemblance to the original is bypassed by the production of a truth effect with which the imagination of the beholder engages'.[125] Emma had copies made for Elizabeth and Adele. In one sense, Elizabeth's copy of her father's portrait was a reminder of her change in status, a shadow of what had been, yet it also held value as a souvenir of their life together, invested in emotional rather than financial significance, as well as being material proof that Elizabeth came from a successful family that could afford portraits of its members. [126]

In 1895, at the age of eighty-seven, Elizabeth dictated her autobiography, based on diaries and letters, to her daughter, at the request of her children. Her husband had died in 1879, and it may have been thought that a decent interval had since elapsed. This history may have been prompted by the prospect of a restoration of

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[124] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton*, 154.

[125] Ponsonby, *Stories from Home,* 67-70; Marcia Pointon, *Portrayal and the Search for Identity* (London: Reaktion, 2013), 65-6.

[126] Stewart, *On Longing,* 135.

family wealth and position, as Elizabeth's son Edward had been named heir to Claverdon. As her memoir was intended for family consumption there is an element of selectivity here. For instance, Elizabeth did not fully explain why she had not married Wheler until 1844, within twelve months of Galton's death. She admitted that they had many talks 'on the subject of marriage', and while she thought it imprudent to marry on only £500-600 a year, her mother and sister simply advised her to wait 'till all my fortune was paid to me by the end of the year, and then to marry'.[127] Elizabeth's instincts proved correct; in marrying Wheler she removed herself from the family circle of wealth.

The Whelers' first home consisted of rooms in a house whose other occupants included the owner's groom, his family and a Catholic priest. Elizabeth Wheler brightly declared: 'We were to have as many rooms as we wanted and a kitchen to ourselves'. But this home reduced her status dramatically; her family owned some of the largest properties in the Midlands, but now her social equals were her landlord's servants. They eventually settled in 1846 at Snitterfield, nine miles from Leamington, living 'a very quiet life with two maids and a boy from the village keeping "poultry, pigs and a swarm of bees"'.[128] This contrasted sharply with her former life: attending Queen Victoria's coronation, having her own coming-out ball and mixing with upper-class society all her life.[129] Now, she wrote: 'I am ashamed to go on with this journal, I have so little worth telling'.[130]

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[127] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton*, 154.

[128] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 177.

[129] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton,*15-16.

[130] Ibid.,179.

There was probably little money to spare and details of the interiors of the married couple's homes and material objects are missing, the silence suggestive of a relative impoverishment. A retreat to the country saved the cost of fashionable furniture, clothing and entertaining; it also obviated the risk of exposing the poverty of their surroundings to inquisitive or sympathetic friends: 'in middle-class eyes', as Davidoff and Hall emphasise,' to be poor was to be vulgar'.[131] But to live with only two maids, which placed the Whelers in the category of the lower middle class, revealed the extent of their reduced circumstances.[132] A daughter was born in 1847 and a son in 1850. Her daughter later wrote that Elizabeth made most of the children's clothes and initially taught her children, a governess or tutor probably being beyond their means.

In sharp contrast to her vivid descriptions of earlier family social events, Elizabeth wrote in 1851: 'Our chief excitement is a swarm of bees or a hatch of chickens', the nearest she came to showing dissatisfaction with her life.[133] On occasions life was brightened by pageantry; her brother Darwin became High Sheriff, her mother paid for family holidays, and in 1851 the Whelers were invited to the Great Exhibition by friends.[134] There is no criticism of her husband, although interestingly, 'Reminiscences' is in her maiden name; the married name is bracketed as though demoted below that of Galton, even though Edward was a member of the gentry.

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[131] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 360.

[132] Hamlett, *Material Relations,* 54, Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 265.

[133] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 187.

[134] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 183-186.

In 1847 Edward was made a stipendiary magistrate.[135] Stipendiary posts were useful sinecures for impoverished gentry, forming an extra buffer between the wealthier members and those lower down the social scale, as well as cementing powers of local patronage, although recipients like Wheler must have been aware of the gulf between himself and his patrons. Amanda Vickery has charted this social mix, showing the porosity of the boundaries between them.[136] Created in 1792 for London, stipendiary posts paid about £400 a year, and slowly spread to provincial towns.[137] Edward may have received less, as provincial posts were met from local rates, but it would nevertheless have been a welcome augmentation to the family income, even allowing for additional expenditure on clothing and personal appearance. In the same year, significantly, he resumed shooting with his gentry relations, the Sitwells, indicating that his improved financial situation had enhanced his social status.[138]

Restoration

Despite acknowledging her reduced circumstances, Elizabeth also sought to remind the world that she remained a member of the middle class, while at the same time avoiding society to prevent incurring unaffordable expenses. Philanthropy, while clearly important to her as a benevolent act, could also provide a marker of status, for as Sarah Richardson observes, there were numerous motives for philanthropic participation including benevolence, social control and

[135] Galton, 'Reminiscences',177.

[136] Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter,* 31.

[137] Frank Milton, *The English Magistracy* (London: OUP, 1967), 29, 35-6.

[138] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton*, 166.

personal ambition, but one particularly visible one, identified by Simon Morgan was a 'shared identity resting on the assertion of female civic virtue'.[139]

Elizabeth noted enthusiastically in her memoir that in 1847 she was offered a district to visit by her vicar in which she 'took a great interest'.[140] In 1846 she also collected clothing for distribution in famine-struck Ireland.[141] Through this virtuous work, Elizabeth could also gain access to female networks, such as women's committees, without the expense of socialising formally, further contributing to her attempts to maintain her status in the community. Additionally, attached to philanthropy was a social life of fund-raising balls and bazaars offering opportunities to mix with elite local society and reconnect her with other women of her class, especially useful for families such as the Whelers, with their children's future to consider.[142]

Prochaska argues that 'By the mid-century, women visitors had helped to change the temper of English society, while strengthening their own lives and raising their expectations'.[143] Edward's employment as a magistrate and Elizabeth's

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[139] Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 64; Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place*,125; see also Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*; Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980).

[140] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 177.

[141] Ibid., 176.

[142] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 195.

[143] Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy,* 137.

philanthropy may seem insignificant, but they were a crucial recognition of their middle-class status, however marginal, by their better-off peers. Andrew Moilliett's account of Galton's memoirs mentions an income of £500-600 a year, but this may have been an exaggeration.[144] Such an income would not have required retrenchment to a cottage so far from Leamington, nor the need for Edward, a gentleman, to accept paid employment. When the children were ten and seven, in 1857, the Whelers decided to return to Leamington for their schooling. 'It was a great trial, we were all so fond of the country, but their education was imperative', Elizabeth wrote.[145] Whether that was the real cause of regret, or whether it was the daunting cost of moving back into society we cannot tell: throughout her 'Reminiscences' Wheler created an atmosphere of cheerful optimism and an opacity consisting of silences, absences and omissions which is difficult to penetrate.

Linda Peterson discusses the textual strategies used in epistolary narratives, and similar strategies in reminiscences and memoirs, where writers have the benefit of hindsight and memories are open to reconstruction.[146] Elizabeth's memoir used such strategies to reveal certain subjectivities and to hide others. It exhibited pride in showing how she came through a difficult period but hid the humiliation and considerable privation she must have experienced in contrast to her earlier life. In

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[144] Moilliet, *Elizabeth Anne Galton,* 154.

[145] Galton, 'Reminiscences', 197.

[146] Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2001, first published 1999), 19-22.

recording her simple married life alongside her comfortable earlier days, she was, either unintentionally or deliberately, exposing the contrasts. In 1912 her son, at the age of sixty-two, inherited the Claverdon estate and, taking the name of Wheler-Galton, restored the family's standing.[147]

Elizabeth Wheler's memoir reveals a woman who embraced several roles during her life: dutiful wife, loving mother, loyal daughter, with no suggestion that she had any unfulfilled ambition, even though her social and financial position as a married woman was in stark contrast to her former life. Through her autobiography, she revealed an identity tied to her varied familial roles, which survived a dramatic shift down the social scale. Her family's status and her philanthropic activities were deployed as part of her claim to retain her previous social standing, although the autobiography – perhaps unwittingly – revealed, rather than hid, her greatly reduced circumstances. Elizabeth's hesitation in marrying a man of modest means indicates that she was not indifferent or ignorant of such matters, but if the marriage came at a price, she did not fully share it in her 'Reminiscences'. Thus, she concluded in 1904: 'my married life [has been] unusually happy'.[148]

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[147] Philip Styles, editor, "Parishes: Claverdon," in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 3, Barlichway Hundred* (London: Victoria County History, 1945), 69-73. *British History Online*, accessed March 1, 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol3/pp69-73.

[148] Galton, *Reminiscences,* 206.

Conclusion

Historians have rightly stressed the complexity of the public and the private, both through the exploration of men's identities as domestic family men and women's strategies for entering the arenas of politics, education or waged work. Nevertheless, middle-class women still had to find their way around social and cultural concepts of femininity that stressed association with domesticity, family life and the material culture of the home. This chapter has focused on objects, their acquisition, ownership and loss to examine how four women of different circumstances and marital status negotiated their way through domesticity and femininity. Although Annie Watt created a handsome home, she maintained her principles in pursuing a spending plan which was thrifty, if not frugal, strengthening her identity as a capable, careful and independent domestic manager. Anne Boulton, in contrast, spent generously, almost lavishly, on furniture, furnishings, china and glassware to reinforce her virtuous reputation, and no doubt for the sheer aesthetic pleasure of living in a beautiful home. In doing so she enhanced her identity as a wealthy, independent but respectable woman of property, one who demonstrated that she could successfully live alone and enjoy a social life, especially in the better spa towns. Catherine Hutton recovered from the trauma of material loss in the Birmingham Riots by maintaining a respectable if retiring way of life at home. However, she also challenged the boundaries of provincial domestic femininity by her invigorating journeys of hardship and danger in wild places to achieve a special freedom from society. The letters she produced on those journeys she later used to establish a new identity for herself as a woman of

letters, endorsed by correspondents such as Charles Dickens.[149] In Wheler's case, marriage entailed reduced circumstances, and in the absence of domestic possessions that could underpin her immediate family's station in life, she built her identity around her natal family's status, her own philanthropic activities and various respectable familial roles. Although in a more muted form than in the past, she tenaciously retained her social standing on behalf of her children. Each of these four women thus negotiated the social norms of provincial society, particularly the link between femininity and domesticity, to shape their own identities and to achieve an impressive level of independence, and recognition as self-sufficient, yet respectable, middle-class women.

[149] Charles Dickens to Catherine Hutton, 23 December 1841, in Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 210.

Chapter Five: Authorship

Introduction

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries print culture expanded in response to growing demand for reading matter, particularly from the middle classes, offering increasing opportunities for women to become authors, among them Catherine Marsh, considered in Chapter 2.[1] This chapter explores further the

[1] On female authorship see: Felicity James and Ian Inkster, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin Barbauld Circle 1740-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP), 2012); Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Kay Boardman and Shirley Jones, *Popular Victorian Women Writers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press (hereafter MUP, 2004); Elizabeth Eger et al., editors, *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1994, first published 1992); Cheryl A. Wilson, '"Something like Mine": Catherine Hutton, Jane Austen, and Feminist Recovery Work', *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no. 2 (2015); Linda H. Peterson, editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing* (hereafter *Victorian Women's Writing*), (Cambridge: CUP, 2015); Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton: Princeton University

opportunities that writing, and publication, provided for women to create and subsequently build on their identities as authors. It focuses on three relatively neglected Midland authors who between the 1780s and 1840s attained authorial recognition in their lifetimes but were excluded from the later literary canon: Catherine Hutton, Susanna Watts and Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck.

The first part considers Birmingham author Catherine Hutton (1757-1846), discussed in the previous chapter, who was fifty-four when her first, unpublished, novel became a magazine serial in 1811.[2] It examines her choice of genres and analyses two of her books in detail to assess the insights they provide into her development as an author in later life. The second part examines the work of Susanna Watts (1768-1842) of Leicester, whose eclectic writing offered both a public service and surprisingly radical views. It shows how these two extremes could be brought together and enriched by the provincial context in which Watts operated, and how she constructed a unique identity from them. Finally, the work of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck (née Galton) (1778-1856), daughter of a successful Midland gunmaker and mentioned in Chapter 1, is analysed showing her efforts to gain recognition as an intellectual by engaging with scientific theories and religious politics.

From the late eighteenth-century production and demand of print matter expanded, increasing profitability for publishers and authors. Print technologies

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Press (hereafter PUP), 2009); Joanne Shattock, editor, *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

[2] Catherine Hutton, 'Oakwood House', *La Belle Assemblée*, 3 (Jan 1811): 22-5. Later published as the novel *Oakwood Hall*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1819).

improved; from 1837 copyright law benefitted authors and stamp duty on newspapers encouraged the growth of periodicals. The expansion of the railways from the 1840s revolutionised distribution and circulation in the provinces.[3] Publishers relied heavily on relatively unknown authors, professional and amateur, to provide writing of sufficient quality and quantity to maintain sales,[4] while the novel became an essential and profitable genre, its very ephemerality increasing demand.[5] Requiring no qualifications or higher education, novels and periodicals attracted ambitious female writers such has Hutton and Watts, whereas Schimmelpenninck preferred non-fiction. Their early letter-writing in the home

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[3] Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 24-26. For a full treatment of the periodical and magazine market see also: Margaret Beetham, 'Periodical Writing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing*; Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003); Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines: an Anthology* (Manchester: MUP, 2001); Ros Ballaster *et al.*, *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991); Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women's Magazines From the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972).

[4] Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?* 19-20, 42-44.

[5] Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 40-1.

taught them how to transform their domestic, physical, financial or psychological confinement into a space of intellectual exploration. As Leonie Hannan has argued, such women 'used the spaces of home, literally and imaginatively, to forge a life of the mind'.[6]

Although all three benefited from the new publishing opportunities open to women, most or all of their output has since been neglected.[7] In her analysis of opportunities open to women authors to enter the literary canon, Alison Chapman suggests that entry was linked to 'an admitted and acceptable standard of literary value', but value often depended on subjective factors, such as women's adherence to appropriate class and political values, including patriotism. This contrasts with the eighteenth century where, Cheryl Turner suggests, circulating libraries contributed to the formation of a more eclectic canon by their popularisation of novels.[8] Some literary historians emphasise that from the 1770s, with a variety of literary careers to choose from, women self-consciously

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[6] Leonie Hannan, 'Making Space: English Women, Letter-Writing, and the Life of the Mind, c.1650-1750', in *Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn*, edited by Kathryn Beebe and Angela Davis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 79. See also: Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[7] See: Schellenberg, *Professionalization*, Chapter 7*;* Peterson, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Women's Writing,* 10.

[8] Alison Chapman, 'Achieving Fame and Canonicity' in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing,* 73; Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 136.

constructed authorial identities of great diversity.[9] Although this tactic was initially successful, by the late nineteenth century, the institutionalization of literature worked against eclecticism. Clifford Siskin argues that this 'took writing out of the hands of women', but many critics argue that a more influential force was applied: an erasure trope employed by male and female authors attempting to 'subsume their predecessors'. Schellenberg names, among others, Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, and Frances Burney, who thus created 'influential career narratives', and helped consign others to insignificance.[10] Such women writers, Schellenberg argues, marginalised 'proper women writers and readers to a literary form presumed to be domestic, derivative, and inferior' in a quite systematic, if variable, way. Although Peterson argues that Victorian women were less likely to be forgotten because they were more likely to record their achievements, her study of Mary Howitt (1799-1888) does not bear that out. The Howitts were forgotten, as Oliphant regretted, and Peterson confirms.[11]

Jean Marsden regrets that the opportunity to recover reputations, including that of Hannah More, was missed by feminist scholars of the 1980s and early 1990s; the

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[9] Schellenberg, *Professionalization*, 8-9, 76-7, 97, 167; Eger et al, *Women, Writing*, 122-25; Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, 4.

[10] Schellenberg, *Professionalization*, 164-66; Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (hereafter JHUP), 1998), 195, quoted in Schellenberg, p.164; Peterson, 'Introduction' in *Victorian Women's Writing*, 10.

[11] Schellenberg, *Professionalization*, 163; Peterson, 'Introduction' *Victorian Women's Writing,* 10; Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters, 97.*

search for early feminists taking priority over 'the contribution a woman writer may have made to a "non-feminist cause"'.[12] Jane Rendall and Alexandra Shepard agree; Rendall argues that 'Gender was not necessarily the primary factor determining women's loyalties and interests', while Shepard observes that 'gender was not a monolithic category of identity'.[13] This erasure of work and reputations of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century women, many of whom – including the three authors considered in this chapter – had worked across genres, rather than contributing to one corpus, is referred to as 'The Great Forgetting'.[14] Despite using their authorial agency to help establish literature as a profession, these authors were excluded from the canon. In addition, exclusion might arise from obsolescence of style or genre, or the writer's absence from the current literary circuit. This chapter thus seeks to recover the writing of three (relatively) 'forgotten' women: Watts, Hutton and Schimmelpenninck, not primarily to reclaim their literary and other merits, but to shed further light on women's identities as published

[12] Jean Marsden, 'Beyond Recovery: Feminism and the Future of Eighteenth-Century Literary Studies', *Feminist Studies* 28, no.3 (2002), 659,661-2; see also: Wilson, '"Something like Mine"', 152-3.

[13] Jane Rendall, 'Introduction' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914,* edited by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 4; Alexandra Shepard, 'Honesty, Worth and Gender' in *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800*, edited by Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), 89.

[14] Schellenberg, *Professionalization* 164-5; Peterson, 'Introduction', *Victorian Women's Writing*, 10.

authors at a time of great change in the literary market, and how that empowered them to fulfil other ambitions.

Catherine Hutton (1757-1846)

In 1816, Catherine Hutton wrote from Birmingham to inform one of her London publishers, Robert Baldwin, that Longmans, her other publisher, was thinking of producing a new periodical:

> ...in the manner of the *Spectator,* and placing at the head of it a few celebrated names … He [Robert Orme] asked me to contribute to the work, in case they should bring it forward. To be classed with such writers as Mrs Barbauld, Mrs Inchbald, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Hamilton! What an honour! I could have no objection, if I were deserving it.[15]

The periodical failed to materialise, but the invitation indicates that within five years of her first publication at the age of fifty-four, Hutton had acquired status and marketable value as an author. More importantly, her response to the invitation and willingness to test herself against the giants of the female literary world, suggests that she was developing confidence and ambition as an author, in marked contrast to the reclusive Catherine Hutton damaged by the 1791 Birmingham riots, last seen in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

[15] Catherine Hutton Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century: Letters of Catherine Hutton* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1891), 159.

Bridget Hill has argued that '[Hutton's] letters alone are evidence – if it is needed – that she had a talent for writing'.[16] Yet she has been largely ignored by historians. Only Hill, in women's history, Margaret Ponsonby, in design history, and Cheryl Wilson, in literary history, have analysed her life and writing in any depth. Audrey Duggan has written an informative biography, but one with little historical analysis, yet Hutton's perceptive observations of provincial middle-class life are often quoted by scholars as illustrative of social and cultural practices in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[17]

Hutton's career and later reputation might have been different had her father allowed her the formal education she had requested; had she begun to write earlier, and had she not become a victim of literary politics, lost in 'the Great Forgetting' discussed in this chapter's introduction. She nevertheless was one of the many resourceful female authors whose literary professionalism, as Cheryl Turner has observed, 'was an integral part of the development of women's fiction

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[16] Bridget Hill, 'Catherine Hutton (1756-1846): a Forgotten Letter-Writer', *Women's Writing* 1, no. 1 (1994): 46.

[17] Hill, 'Catherine Hutton'; Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 45-8; Wilson, '"Something like Mine"', 151-164; Audrey Duggan, *A Lady of Letters: Catherine Hutton 1757-1846* (Studley: Brewin, 2000). See also, for example, Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain 1815-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP), 2009),1; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1987), 290, 444.

during the eighteenth century' and helped to establish writing as a profession for women during the expansion of print culture in the nineteenth century.[18] Hutton's output was popular both with the lesser gentry and the lower middle class, the fastest-growing sector of the middle class.

The first two decades of the nineteenth century have been seen as a hiatus between two distinctly fertile periods for women's writing and, perhaps because of that, have received less attention.[19] Turner, for example, describes the rise of women's fiction in the eighteenth century as 'a cardinal phase in women's increasing involvement in our written culture', whereas Linda Peterson and Lee Erickson agree that the 1820s and 1830s were the first decades, thanks to the rise of periodicals, when authorship could support sufficient writers to be classed as a 'profession'.[20] Yet Hutton and other women were writing professionally in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, not necessarily within the financial definition, but certainly within the definition of displaying 'the skill, knowledge, experience, standards or expertise of a professional'.[21]

Peterson argues that women writers were reticent about money, publicly at least, and suggests their dedication to writing was often, in any case, 'more idealistic'

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[18] Turner, *Living by the Pen,* 60.

[19] Although see: Elizabeth Eger *et al*, *Women, Writing*; James and Inkster, *Religious Dissent*.

[20] Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 3; Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters,* 13; Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form* (Baltimore: JHUP, 1996), 72.

[21] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152053. [Accessed 2 March 2018].

than realistic.[22] However, although many women, like Catherine Hutton, grappled with the vexed question of balancing their respectability and class identity with ambition for professional status and earnings, those ambitions could increasingly win the day. Hutton hints at this when informing Mary Anne Coltman that she had visited Longmans in London, and they had 'agreed with me on the terms of publication'.[23] This section begins by examining the influences which led to Hutton's late, but clearly determined, ventures into publication, some twenty years after the events described in chapter 4. An analysis of two of her books, written between 1811 and 1821, follows, to assess their contribution to her developing identity as an author and the section concludes by exploring the impact of authorship on her life.[24]

The Route to Authorship

Prior to the 'Church and King' riots of 1791 in Birmingham, Hutton had lived the comfortable life of a middle-class woman, managing the Birmingham family home, caring for her semi-invalid mother, and enjoying a varied social and cultural life, including free range of her father's bookshop and circulating library. According to William Hutton, 'As I hired out books, the fair sex did not neglect the shop', suggesting the shop was the source of Catherine's considerable knowledge of

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[22] Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, 36-7.

[23] Catherine Hutton Beale, editor, *Catherine Hutton and Her Friends* (hereafter Catherine Hutton) (Birmingham: Cornish, 1895), 155.

[24] Catherine Hutton, *The Miser Married,* 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1813); Hutton, *The Tour of Africa*, 3 vols. (London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1819-1821).

popular novels.[25] She also appreciated poetry and other writings, thanks to the mentoring of her mother's best friend, Elizabeth Coltman of Leicester, mainly through correspondence. This Nonconformist family were well-connected hosiery manufacturers and intellectuals; one daughter, Elizabeth Heyrick, became a leading pamphleteer and campaigner for animal welfare and the abolition of slavery, while her sister Anne ran a female literary society and was a close friend of Hutton's.[26] Before marriage, Elizabeth Coltman, cousin to Robert Dodsley, had reviewed for periodicals and published poetry. She guided Hutton's reading, encouraged her to write about literature in their correspondence, and to develop opinions on, for example, marriage, politics and religion, which Hutton later used in her published writings. Hutton said of her own mother: 'She never read and seldom wrote', so Coltman's mentorship was probably pivotal to her writing career.[27] Hutton's other close friend, Mrs André of Enfield, London was the daughter of Dru Drury, entomologist and Fellow of the Linnaean Society. Upper class and well-connected, she gave Hutton and her brother, Thomas, an entrée into London society, attending events such as the Prince of Wales' Birthnight Ball at St James' Palace in 1780. Mrs André remained one of Hutton's main

[25] Catherine Hutton, editor, *The Life of William Hutton* (Studley: Brewin, 1998, first published 1816), 42.

[26] See Beale, *Catherine Hutton*.

[27] Ibid., 2-3, 64-5; Llewellyn Jewitt, *The Life of William Hutton* (London: Warne, 1872, first published 1816), 57.

correspondents and the recipient of her first written account of the riots, published posthumously in 1875.[28]

After the riots Hutton withdrew from Birmingham society to the family's rebuilt country home, Bennett's Hill, but continued to write and correspond with her network of family and friends. In 1811 she published her first novel, *Oakwood House*, serialised from 1811 to 1813 in the periodical *La Belle Assemblée*, which Alison Adburgham describes as 'lavishly elegant'.[29] This marked the beginning of a prolific writing career: between 1811 and 1844 she published over sixty articles, three novels, and wrote or edited two non-fiction books. In 1813 Longman published her novel, *The Miser Married.* Evidence of Hutton's earnings is hard to find, with virtually no mention of her writing achievements in the memoir of 1891 edited by her relative, Catherine Hutton Beale. Only when listing Hutton's celebrated literary friends such as Charles Dickens and Eliza Cook does Beale allow us a glimpse of the professional literary community to which Hutton belonged.[30] However, *Ainsworth's Magazine* offered her £10 per page in 1843, with the proprietor, Harrison Ainsworth, apologising that it was not more, suggesting that Hutton had commanded more substantial fees in the past.[31]

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[28] Catherine Hutton, *A Narrative of the Riots in Birmingham, July 1791* (hereafter A Narrative) edited by Catherine Hutton Beale (Birmingham: White and Pike, c.1875), MS 168/28/3, BAH; Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 25-7

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[29] Catherine Hutton 'Oakwood House'; Adburgham, *Women in Print,* 218.

[30] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 228.

[31] Duggan, *A Lady of Letters,* 139.

Like many female authors, Hutton may not have explicitly referred to herself as a professional writer. She trod a delicate path between ladylike femininity, taking 'care not to display the little knowledge I possessed', and a desire for a reputation as a 'woman of letters'.[32] Mary Jean Corbett suggests that authors like Hutton sought to appropriate 'the discourse of femininity as a means of legitimating their public identities, of achieving professional success or making political change'. The consequence of that, Kathryn Gleadle has argued, was the perpetuation of the 'hegemonic gendered code' for longer, perhaps, than it need have been.[33] As well as negotiating their gendered identities as authors, women's position in the middle-class hierarchy may also have been significant: Hutton's family, for example, had only risen above poverty in the previous generation, and the riots of 1791 had shown her how quickly middle-class status could evaporate.[34] Hutton's ambivalence towards authorship, however, should not be exaggerated. In the preface to *The Miser Married,* she revealed that nervousness of exposing her writing to public judgement 'murders sleep' (a self-conscious reference to Shakespeare), and explained that she began writing only after reading an overly-sentimental novel by Lady Morgan: '"Surely", said I, as I laid down the book,

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[32] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 8.

[33] Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Autobiographies* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), 15; Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens,*116, 257-58. See also Judith Johnston and Hilary Fraser, 'The Professionalization of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon', in *Women and Literature*, 234.

[34] Catherine Hutton to Mrs André, 25 August 1791, in *A Narrative,* 26.

"Surely I could write as well as this!" I tried and believed I had not been mistaken'.[35] There is little sign of a crisis of confidence in this last sentence; indeed, Hutton had already gained experience of publishing with her 1811 serial 'Oakwood House'. Her display of feminine modesty camouflaged a shrewd promotion of her identity as an author. As Schellenberg has argued, too many literary historians have assumed that eighteenth-century women had 'a uniform lack of self-confidence or ambition in the face of societal obstacles'.[36]

Hutton was not immune from pressure around her status and class, but nevertheless negotiated her own artistic course. Peterson notes that women writers were generally reticent about their earnings, and developed various models to justify professional literary work, drawing on 'discourses of work as public service and work as self-realization, self-help, and self-dependence'.[37]Some of these Hutton employed; for instance, in suggesting she was performing a public service in employing her latent writing talents to rescue readers from Lady Morgan's excesses, or in declaring, in 1822, perhaps more seriously, a self-realization of her craft by discussing her work alongside that of Jane Austen: 'her novels are pictures of common life, something like mine, but much more varied; and her character is … something like mine' she wrote, before adding honestly, 'or

[35] Hutton, *A Miser Married*, xi; Hutton, 'Oakwood House'. Morgan's novel was probably *The Wild Irish Girl* (London: Phillips, 1807).

[36] Schellenberg, *Professionalization,* 96.

[37] Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, 48-9.

what I would wish mine to be'.[38] In *The Miser Married*, she was arguably thinking of herself when she had her heroine Charlotte Montgomery praising the novelist Samuel Richardson: 'He shewed women that they might write without learning; that they might be pleasing and interesting authors, by the talents, alone, which God had given them'.[39] While acknowledging her limitations, it was as a 'pleasing and interesting' writer, who maintained a tenacious hold in various genres, that Hutton carved her route into authorship.

The Miser Married and A Tour of Africa

In 1813, *The Miser Married,* Hutton's first published novel, but second piece of domestic fiction, was published. Between 1815 and 1818 *The Monthly Magazine* published her 'Letters written during a Tour of North Wales', sent to her brother during four tours between 1797 and 1800. In 1817 the novel *The Welsh Mountaineer* appeared, followed by *Oakwood Hall* in 1819, a renamed, novel-length version of 'Oakwood House', the serial of 1811.[40] All of Hutton's novels were on themes of domestic manners, and incorporated travel writing drawn from

[38] Catherine Hutton to Isabella Hutton 6 November 1822, in Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 183.

[39] Hutton, *The Miser Married,* 2:178.

[40] Hutton, *The Miser Married*; Hutton, *The Welsh Mountaineer,* 3 vols*.* (London: Longman, 1817); Hutton, *Oakwood Hall, 3 vols.* (London: Longmans, 1819); Hutton, 'Letters written during a Tour of North Wales', *The Monthly Magazine 39, (June 1815): 410-13 (first instalment).* See Appendix 2 for a reference list of Hutton's extant literary output.

personal experience.[41] At this time, books of travel in more exotic places overseas were becoming popular and overshadowing Hutton's domestic journeys.[42] *The Tour of Africa,* published between 1819 and 1821 and discussed below, was perhaps an attempt to find a niche in this new market and hints at Hutton's authorial confidence.

A Miser Married is a novel of domestic fiction, in which a widow, Lady Montgomery, and her daughter Charlotte, the narrator of the story, retrench to the country pending the outcome of a legal challenge to Charlotte's inheritance. Both women, deeply in debt having lived extravagantly in London, hope to restore their fortune. Charlotte, as narrator, unfolds events to her friend Harriet in epistolary form, relating how her mother marries their wealthy neighbour, a renowned miser, and proceeds to civilize him, but to her daughter's disapproval, she leaves him in ignorance of her debts. Charlotte also declares to Harriet her attachment to the man who is challenging her right to her father's fortune, but having candidly revealed her debts, his father forbids their marriage. Using a *Deus ex Machina* device in the form of an unknown will to restore Charlotte's wealth, Hutton adds her own moral commentary on the themes of class, sexual equality and domestic economy, especially debt. Finally, Hutton produces a conclusion in which

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[41] Unsigned review of Catherine Hutton's *Oakwood Hall* (London: Longmans, 1819), *The Monthly Review* (Oct 1819): 214.

[42] See, for example: Lady Mary Wortley Montague, 'Turkish Embassy Letters, 1718', and Anna Maria Falconbridge, 'Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone' (1791), in *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing*, edited by Shirley Foster and Sara Mills (Manchester: MUP, 2002).

Charlotte and her mother each find happiness through marriages based on mutual respect between the sexes, as well as sensible domestic economy.

Although epistolary novels were becoming outdated before the turn of the eighteenth century, this style enabled Hutton to use Samuel Richardson's work to endorse women's role as authors.[43] Charlotte is made to observe that the lack of a classical education was no longer a bar to women becoming writers. Richardson's novels had meant that [Women] 'left off making puddings and pies, on the discovery, and betook themselves to writing letters … and, from the days of Clarissa Harlowe and Anna Howe … the world has been inundated, and, doubtless, much improved, by female epistolary writing'.[44] Hutton adopted the role of literary critic in two of her novels, discussing the writing of Samuel Richardson, Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Frances Burney among others, but as can be seen in the last quote, also acted as an agent for women readers of limited formal education like herself, inviting them to consider themselves as potential writers.[45] Her female network, especially Elizabeth Coltman and Mrs André, had provided her with the opportunity to develop epistolary skills, and in choosing to write in an outdated epistolary form, Hutton extended similar encouragement to others.

The Tour of Africa, Hutton's next large project, was also primarily aimed at middle-class female readers, but showed her moving to a different genre. Having gained a life-long interest in geography after studying Guthrie's *Geographical Grammar* as

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[43] For Samuel Richardson's feminisation of the novel see: Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 10.

[44] Hutton, *A Miser Married*, 2:178.

[45] See: Ibid., 2:175-81; Hutton, *Oakwood Hall*, 3:97-9.

an adolescent, *The Tour of Africa* was an unusual combination of facts culled from existing published accounts by several explorers, which Hutton compiled into one African expedition under the direction of an anonymous fictional narrator.[46] His status as the son of a clergyman was probably intended to reassure female readers, or their husbands, of the topic's respectability. This project shows Hutton's self-belief in her own judgement and ability, as the works used were by well-known explorers yet, as with her novels, she added her own commentary, sharing her opinions on matters that included slavery and animal welfare.[47] Although she was criticised for failing to reference sources, several reviews of *The Tour of Africa* were favourable. *The Monthly Magazine*, for example, concluded that the whole work 'must be deemed highly auxiliary to the great cause of African research.'[48] In 1824, *La Belle Assemblée* published a biographical memoir of Hutton, which she had drafted herself. Here she explained her motive for writing on Africa:

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[46] Guthrie, *Geographical Grammar* (London: Knox, 1771)*;* Hutton, *The Tour of Africa;* Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 7.

[47] Hutton, 'Preface' *The Tour of Africa*, v-vi; Animal welfare is also a theme in *The Welsh Mountaineer,* I:29-30 and O*akwood Hall*, I:101-5. On women and/or animal welfare in the long nineteenth century, see Moira Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press (hereafter UMP), 1998); James Turner, *Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind: Reckoning with the Beast* (Baltimore: JHUP, 1980).

[48] Review, *The Tour of Africa* vol. 1, *The Monthly Review*, (Dec 1819): 442.

> She thought that by divesting books of travels in interesting parts of the globe of dry details, abstruse disquisitions, and all indelicacies, she should be rendering a service to her own sex; and that, while her work afforded them amusement, it might supply them with all the information on the subject of Africa which it was necessary for a well-educated female to possess.[49]

The reader is here reminded that respectable women had no need for any deeper knowledge of Africa. However, despite the reassuring mention of indelicacies having been removed, the detailed descriptions of, for example, rites of passage, the fate of slaves, especially women, and the vivid portrayal of animal habits as well as habitats, were often remarkably graphic. Respectable women were being offered detailed information on issues such as cruelty by occupying colonists towards indigenous peoples like the pygmies, and animal cruelty, in addition to the wonders and treasures of Africa.[50]

Not a campaigner herself, Hutton was nevertheless providing readers with information which may have encouraged their participation in campaigns on subjects important to them. This was Hutton's *modus operandi.* She regarded entering a public debate or dispute 'unamiable in a woman'. When, for example, a 'rather sensible' Quaker girl in a Blackpool boarding house debated with a gentleman, condemning slavery, Hutton, although approving of the girl's

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[49] 'Biographical Memoir of Miss Catherine Hutton', *La Belle Assemblée* 29, No. 188 (Jun. 1824): 235.

[50] Hutton, *The Tour of Africa, 1:8-13; 3:2-4, 3:107-8.*

sentiments, disapproved of her public show.[51] Yet, Hutton did not lack confidence to be the instigator of public discourse in the press, and usually signed her name. In 1819, for example, she wrote with an air of authority to *The Monthly Magazine* on the subject of 'opening a commercial intercourse with the interior of Africa', which she heartily recommended, adding that 'there is no time to be lost' as the French were already doing the same.[52] Through her writing, Hutton arguably experienced a vicarious form of exploration; becoming involved through an imagined community of explorers, something few British women could engage in before the 1820s, other than as wives of British colonial officials, philanthropists and missionaries.[53]

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[51] Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman*, 62.

[52] Catherine Hutton, undated letter to the Editor, *The Monthly Magazine* 47, no. 324 (1819): 221.

[53] Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 94-5, 121; Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 115-16. The concept of 'imagined community' is drawn from the following: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006 rev. ed., first published 1983); Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995); Pamela Corpron Parker, 'Woman of Letters: Elizabeth Gaskell's Autograph Collection and Victorian Celebrity' in *Material Women 1750-1950:*

In addition, Hutton may have felt some sense of being a female pioneer in bringing to women an extensive account of the continent of Africa, tailored to their needs and delivered in a confident, authorial voice. The self-penned biographical sketch hinted that she remained ambivalent about her authorial status. It focused on her femininity and accomplishments, devoting little space to her writing: 'Her evenings were passed in … reading to her father; her days were employed in ornamental needlework, and in the garden'. [54]

Hutton was not down-playing her writing achievements, but rather acting strategically. Like many women of the period, as Gleadle, Sarah Richardson and Simon Morgan have shown, Hutton adopted gendered rhetorical devices that empowered her to extend the boundaries of her life through authorship. This is clearly illustrated by her participation in wider debates through membership of an epistolary community of writers and authors such as Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer Lytton and Lady Augusta Leigh, half-sister of Lord Byron.[55] By the 1820s, thanks to authorship, Catherine Hutton had travelled a long way from the Birmingham riots of 1791. She had established an identity as a respectable middle-class female author, an identity acknowledged by the community of authors

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Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices, edited by Maureen Daley Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

[54] 'Biographical Memoir', 236.

[55] Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens;* Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris, 2007).

and litterateurs. Although excluded from the literary canon, in later life Catherine Hutton achieved – and clearly relished – a new identity as a woman of letters.

Susanna Watts (1768-1842)

Formative Years

Susanna Watts was the daughter of an impoverished Leicestershire gentry family, who, despite her financial difficulties, became a well-regarded author, active between the 1780s and the 1830s. Her work crossed several genres and formats, which probably contributed to her exclusion from the literary canon.[56] Nevertheless, Watts' work as an author, civic figure and radical campaigner shows that women's lives in late Georgian Britain could be ones of opportunity, even activism, with many women creating meaningful identities through authorship.

This section focuses on how Watts developed the authority required to promote her radical plans for social reform. It first considers her pathway into authorship, goes on to examine her creation of a civic identity and concludes by looking at how both provided a platform for campaigning. Sources include her published and unpublished work, letters and a scrapbook, together with written recollections of friends and relatives. Shirley Aucott has produced an informative and concise biography; Watts was one of several Midland women mentioned in Clare Midgley's

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[56] 'Susanna Watts Scrapbook', 308-12, MS DE8170/1 unpublished manuscript, Leicester Record Office (hereafter LRO); Shirley Aucott, *Susanna Watts 1768-1842: Author of Leicester's First Guide, Abolitionist and Bluestocking* (Leicester: Aucott, 2004): Isobel Grundy, 'Watts, Susanna (bap. 1768, d. 1842)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*), OUP, 2004. http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38113; accessed 4 Aug 2014.

study of women's anti-slavery campaigns; Kathryn Gleadle discusses her in relation to women's ability to intervene in civic and political affairs; Moira Ferguson identifies Watts as a feminist campaigner for animal welfare and Kenneth Corfield mentions her resistance to Wilberforce's contention that women should not write or be 'stirring up petitions'.[57]

We have, therefore, a picture of a woman engaging in public debates, yet people who knew her described her as 'retiring by nature' and possessing 'extreme sensibility'.[58] Much previous research has singled out her friendship with Elizabeth Heyrick and their collaboration on anti-slavery campaigns; the focus here is on Watts' development as a writer and on its role in establishing her civic and later campaigning identity. Simon Morgan, writing about middle-class women of Leeds, has identified those of secure social and financial status as the ones who often

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[57] William Wilberforce to Thomas Babington, 31 January 1826, in Robert and Samuel Wilberforce, editors, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London: John Murray, 1840), 5:264. See also: Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens;* Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1995, first published 1992); Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy;* Kenneth Corfield, 'Elizabeth Heyrick: Radical Quaker', in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930,* edited by Gail Malmgreen (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

[58] Samuel Coltman, '*Journal' (Transcript of Unpublished Manuscript),* Chapter 21, 142-3, 3 vols. Coltman Records, MS MISC 1153, LRO; Maria Edgeworth to Mary Sneyd, 27 September 1802, in Maria Edgeworth, *Chosen Letters,* edited by F. V. Barry (London: Cape, 1931), 94.

created platforms from which to operate in civic and other public spaces. [59] Lacking such advantages, Susanna Watts employed writing as a way of opening civic and political avenues.

John Watts, a gentleman of Danetts Hall, Leicester, died in 1769, leaving his wife and daughters impoverished by heavy financial losses. The sale of the encumbered family home provided a small annuity for his widow, Joan, and her only surviving daughter, Susanna. Susanna was fortunate in being exposed to the influence of educated people, Dissenters as well as Anglicans like herself. Leicester had a strong cohort of Nonconformists engaged in commerce, making it a main manufacturing and distribution centre for hosiery.[60] One such family, the Coltmans, were Presbyterian hosiery manufacturers who befriended Watts. John and Elizabeth Coltman were intellectuals; Elizabeth referred to Watts as 'daughter Susan', and may have guided her reading, much as she had Catherine Hutton's, while John Coltman probably gave Watts access to his library for her research on Leicester's first travel guide, *A Walk Through Leicester.*[61] Hoping to supplement

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[59] Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place. S*ee also: Twells, *The Civilizing Mission*; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

[60] See: Anonymous, 'A few Recollections in the Life of the Late Mrs Susanna Watts', in *Hymns and Poems of the late Mrs Susanna Watts' (hereafter 'Recollections')* (Leicester: Waddington, 1842).

[61] Susanna Watts, *A Walk Through Leicester: being a Guide to Strangers* (London: Hurst, 1804); See also: James and Inkster, *Religious Dissent,* 34-36; David Wykes, 'The reluctant businessman: John Coltman of St Nicholas Street, Leicester (1727-1808)', *Transactions, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* LXIX

the family income from writing and translating, Watts taught herself French and Italian with the help of the Coltmans' son, Samuel. A lifelong friendship developed, especially with the daughters, Elizabeth (later Heyrick), with whom Watts campaigned for the abolition of slavery and legislation against animal cruelty, and with Mary Ann, her most intimate friend.[62]

Civic Authorship

Watts was sixteen when her first publication, *Chinese Maxims,* an adaptation into heroic verse of Dodsley's *The Oeconomy of Human Life,* appeared in pamphlet form in 1784.[63] Two later verse translations, however, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1786) and Verri's *Roman Nights* (1803) failed to find subscribers.[64] About *Roman Nights* she wrote: 'Labour lost – for another translation having appeared a short time before, mine was of no use'.[65] Between the failures,

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(1995). For the assistance also given to Catherine Hutton by the Coltmans see the first section of this chapter.

[62] Aucott, *Susanna Watts*, 10.

[63] Susanna Watts, *Chinese Maxims, Translated from The Oeconomy of Human Life. Into Heroic Verse* (Leicester: Gregory, 1784). See Appendix 2 for a reference list of Watts' extant works.

[64] Unsuccessfully seeking subscribers, Watts advertised 'Tasso' in the *Northampton Mercury* 2 Dec 1797.

[65] Anonymous, 'A Few Recollections', 55; for the experiences of other writers see: Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers*, 147. The uncertainties of publishing, which increased as patronage declined towards the end of the

however, *Original Poems and Translations*, published by Nichols of London in 1802, brought success and favourable reviews, though evidence of profit is lacking.[66] *The Poetical Register* noted that 'in her translation from the Italian, Miss Watts has been very successful. They have a great deal of freedom and elegance'.[67] With translation mostly the province of classically educated men, the positive reviews suggest that her work was of a high standard. An untraced novel, perhaps published anonymously, was sold for ten guineas around 1802 although, as Turner observes, with the average copyright fee of £10 for a novel 'roughly equivalent to the annual wages of a scullery maid', a high output was required to maintain a livelihood.[68]

In 1802 Watts received a surprise visit from Maria Edgeworth, the famous novelist, and her father Richard. While in Leicester, the Edgeworths had called at a circulating library to check the holdings of Maria's novels. Turner argues that circulating libraries stimulated a demand for women's fiction, taking up as much as forty per cent of a print run.[69] In a letter to a relative, Mary Sneyd, Maria explained that the bookseller, 'an open-hearted man, begged us to look at a book of poems

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eighteenth century are explored in Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters,* 11. Turner, *Living by the Pen,* 87, 91-6.

[66] Susanna Watts, *Original Poems and Translations, particularly Ambra, from Lorenzo de Medici,* chiefly by Susanna Watts (London: Nichols, 1802).

[67] Unsigned review of *Original Poems and Translations*, by Susanna Watts, *The Poetical Register* 2, (1803):435.

[68] Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 116.

[69] Ibid., 134.

just published by a Leicester Lady, Miss Watts'.[70] Recalling that she and her father had earlier seen a specimen of Watts' proposed translation of Tasso, 'which my father had highly admired', they decided to visit her. Maria described their reception:

> Miss Watts was all ecstasy, and lifting up of hands and eyes, speaking always in that loud, theatrical tone … began to pour forth praises: 'Lady Delacour, O! letters for Literary Ladies, O!' Now for the pathetic part. This poor girl sold a novel in four volumes for ten guineas to Lane. My father is afraid, although she has considerable talents, to recommend her to Johnson [his publisher], lest she should not *answer*. Poor girl, what a pity she had no friend to direct her talents; how much she has made me feel the value of mine! [71]

Maria recognised the impact on women writers of being denied access to the androcentric world of writers' and artists' clubs and dining rooms, where male publishers and writers met informally. By these means, as Peterson has pointed out, men had an inestimable advantage over most women when negotiating contracts.[72] Richard Edgeworth was assiduous in promoting Maria's career; she received £1,050 for *Tales of Fashionable Life*, becoming, commercially, the leading novelist of her time.[73] Seemingly uneasy at Watts' 'theatrical' behaviour

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[70] Probably *Original Poems and Translations (1802).*

[71] Maria Edgeworth to Mary Sneyd, 27 September 1802, in *Maria Edgeworth,* 94.

[72] Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, 17.

[73] McCormack, W. J. "Edgeworth, Maria (1768–1849), novelist and educationist", *ODNB;*

and fearful, perhaps, that she might become mentally unstable like her mother, who had dementia, Richard Edgeworth declined to take an interest in her 'considerable talents'.

Watts' most enduring publication, *A Walk Through Leicester*, an early tour guide published in 1804, appears to have been another modest attempt to earn an income, but proved a turning point in Watts' life, showing her that authorship could gain her access to political and other public arenas. *A Walk Through Leicester* was published anonymously, and Watts, using the persona of a male editor-narrator, begins with an address. Unlike her London publisher, Nichols, who wrote history for the educated upper classes, Watts' slim volume was intended for the aspirational middle classes. By inscribing the book 'with respect and gratitude, to the INHABITANTS OF LEICESTER', she indicated that the book, despite its title, was mainly for local consumption. Local readers were told that 'when they point out to their intelligent visitors and curious friends the most memorable objects of their antient and honourable Town, it is his [the editor's] wish that this little companion may be found useful'.[74] This 'puffing' of her work is at odds with Watts' usual self-effacing modesty, suggesting her intention to gain a more permanent entry, albeit unofficial, into civic life. The guide declaims Leicester's ancient past, its dynamic commercial expansion and modern civic refinements such as theatre, coffee shops and pavements which 'may excite in the reflective mind a gratitude for the improved comforts the inhabitants of large towns now enjoy'. The attention

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http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8476; 7 Apr. 2018.

[74] Watts, *A Walk Through Leicester*, 1.

given to the town's history, its Roman artefacts and architectural details, provides gravitas.[75]

A Walk Through Leicester, one of the earliest guides to be published on a provincial town, and Leicester's first, may have contributed to what Peter Borsay describes as happening in many growing provincial towns, 'a notion of civic consciousness and community'.[76] With two civic poems already published valorising a local aristocrat and the opening of the new theatre, Watts was steadily building a myth which the guidebook strongly reinforced; a myth about her credentials as a civic spokesperson. This was a public bid to gain a firm foothold in civic life, going some way to compensate for her loss of family wealth and position.[77] As Peterson has shown, women were seeking models for professional literary work, and drew on various discourses of public service and self-dependence.[78] Watts' network, which included published authors among the landed gentry, women of the anti-slavery movement, and Nonconformists and radical publishers, may have alerted her to such practices.

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[75] Ibid., 4,8-9,16, *et seq*.

[76] Peter Borsay, *The Eighteenth-Century Town 1688-1820* (Harlow: Longman, 1995, first published 1990), 35.

[77] Susanna Watts, 'Lines on the Birthday of the Duke of Rutland' *Gentleman's Magazine* 69, no.1 (1799): 61-2; for myth-making see: Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters,* 48, 93-5.

1799; 'Prologue, Spoken at the Opening of the New Theatre, 1800; see Appendix 2.

[78] Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, 48-9, 93-5.

Leicester was a divided town between the Tory oligarchy who ran the council and the Nonconformists whose efforts were creating the town's wealth. Watts bridged that divide, with friendship and support, and was seemingly respected by both groups. Her acceptance by the townspeople as self-appointed civic poet and author seemed a natural consequence of her peacemaking activities.[79] Simon Morgan and Rosemary Sweet have shown how women could and did participate in local civic life and charitable structures, but there were, as Watts demonstrates, other important, if informal, civic roles which carried responsibility and status, and provided access to public life.[80] Through her writings she articulated, and perhaps helped to instil, a sense of pride in Leicester by reminding townspeople of the town's achievements. In 1811 her poem 'Old Leicestershire' was published by Thomas Coombe, owner of the *Leicestershire Herald*. This civic eulogy celebrates both the pastoral grace and the growing commercial power of the county.[81]

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[79] A. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester 1780-1850* (Leicester: University college, 1954), 21; See also Mark Girouard, *The English Town: A History of Urban Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press (hereafter YUP), 1990); Peter Clark, *The Transformation of English Towns* (London: Hutchinson, 1984); Aucott, *Susanna Watts*, 49-50.

[80] *Morgan, A Victorian Woman's Place;* Rosemary Sweet, 'Women and Civic Life,' in *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth-Century England,* edited by Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 40.

[81]Watts, *Old Leicestershire* (Leicester: Coombe, c.1811).

In around 1815, Watts published a patriotic poem, in broadsheet for wider distribution, declaiming Napoleon's defeat.[82] Watts' anonymous biographer, who Samuel Coltman implies was her adopted daughter, suggests that, as well as 'several children's books, all in the cause of humanity', Watts produced 'numerous ballads written during the war'.[83] These were also probably patriotic verse-ballads issued as affordable broadsheets. She was not alone; Anne Stott and Emma Major have shown that a calculated deployment of gender rhetoric allowed women like Hannah More to publish patriotic pamphlets during the French Revolution.[84] Such political writings, encouraged because they fostered patriotism at a time of national danger, allowed women to shift the boundaries of public space and became important to their sense of civic identity.[85] In such a heady environment

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[82] Aucott, *Susanna Watts*, 9.

[83] Anon, 'Recollections', 62; Coltman, 'Journal', 142, LRO.

[84] Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 148-49; Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church and Nation, 1712-1812* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 240-41. See also Linda Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1994, first published 1992), 268-9.

[85] Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation,* 275-77; Major, *Madam Britannia*, 240-41. For women's negotiation of public spaces see also Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', *Gender & History*, 11, no. 3 (1999); Lawrence Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytical Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 1 (1995). For gendered rhetoric see also Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*; Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women*.

Watts was able to be both radical and patriotic, as well as to appropriate patriotism in the interests of her own identity as a public voice, articulated through her civic and loyal addresses.[86]

Campaigning

Throughout her life Susanna Watts engaged in charitable work, but in the 1820s she began to employ her growing authorial and civic authority in campaigns for social reform and justice. She campaigned with her pen, writing articles, poems and songs to persuade others to join these causes, using the cultural capital she had acquired in Leicester to enter controversies on corporation mismanagement, slavery and animal welfare. Although beginning in Leicester, her campaigns would have a national and international dimension.

In 1829 Susanna Watts published in the *Leicester Journal* a report and the accounts of a charity she had founded in January 1828: The Society for the Relief of Indigent Old Age. Weekly allowances of one shilling or 6d had been paid that year to some sixty-seven-elderly poor in Leicester, to supplement their 'scanty parish stipend of 2s or 2s 6d a week' which – significantly – was paid for by the town, not the corporation. Watts also published annual accounts and a treasurer's report, so 'that the public may be assured that their bounty is faithfully and judiciously applied'.[87]

Her actions can be understood in the context of local political conflict. By 1821, as Leicester's commercial sector grew, the population had reached 30,877, with

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[86] See, for example, Watt's use of royal and aristocratic themes, such as: 'Elegy on the death of Princess Charlotte', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 12 (1817): 61-2.

[87] *Leicester Journal* 11 December 1829.

Nonconformists forming a sizeable minority. Tensions arose between them and the ‘closed, self-elected body’ of Anglican Tories, who ran the chartered corporation as an oligarchy.[88] In 1826 the Tories won the Parliamentary election by offering freeman (and electoral) status to outsiders in return for their votes; 800 took up the offer and the Tories won the election.[89] In March 1833, a petition of 5,400 Leicester signatures went to Parliament, calling for the reform of municipal corporations, and in September 1833 two commissioners, appointed by the Whig government, began an enquiry in Leicester. By then, the accusation had already circulated for some years that charitable endowments administered by the corporation were mismanaged, and the income, intended for the poor, was diverted mostly to Tory supporters in return for electoral support. Patterson, quoting the Commissioners’ 1835 report, states: “‘The wood and coal money’ for example, was no longer applied for, but distributed by the constables, one of whom told a recipient that “it was for their friends in the Blue Interest [Tories]”’.[90] The Commissioners were highly critical of the corporation and in 1835 the Municipal Corporations Bill ended the reign of self-elected corporations nationally.[91]

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[88] Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, 21, 39.

[89] Ibid., 146-164, 199-203.

[90] Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, 209.

[91] Ibid., 211-12; R.A. McKinley, editor, "The Ancient Borough: Municipal Charities," in *A History of the County of Leicester*: Volume 4, the City of Leicester, (London: Victoria County History, 1958), 410-414. British History Online, accessed March 4, 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol4/pp410-414.

Watts may have begun her charity because she wished to assist those of the poor excluded by the corporation on religious or party grounds from receiving donations and was determined her society's finances should be above reproach. Samuel Coltman observed that Watts, 'however retiring by nature and choice … could fearlessly and perseveringly expose the abuses to which some of the Charities of her native town had been misapplied; nor rest until such abuses had been remedied whatever odium she might have to encounter in so acting'.[92] It is possible that Watts played a part in canvassing or collecting signatures for the 1833 petition, given the experience she had gained in organising a sugar boycott in 1824, when 1500 families were persuaded to abstain from using West Indian sugar.[93] Gleadle has argued that women who took part in local politics often did so by virtue of their rank, and that gender was often subordinate to social position.[94] Although Watts was not wealthy, she now had purchase in the locality partly through her gentry status, her civic campaigning and from her unofficial role as Leicester's resident civic poet.

In 1825 Watts had become joint editor with Elizabeth Heyrick and Mary Ann Coltman of an anti-slavery periodical, which ran for a year. Editing a national periodical may have been a bold transition for Watts, but it was also consistent with her growing confidence in using her authorial skills to campaign for causes she believed in. *The Humming Bird* campaigned against slavery and animal

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[92] Coltman, 'Journal', 143, LRO.

[93] *The Humming Bird, or Morsels of Information on the Subject of Slavery with various Miscellaneous Articles 1, no. 7* (Leicester: Cockshaw, 1825): 201.

[94] Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, 192-224.

cruelty, seeing the latter as the source of inhumanity towards humans, especially slaves. While Elizabeth Heyrick wrote and published pamphlets on the subject, Watts began work on poetry calling for legislation to protect animals from cruelty.[95] Thomas Haskell suggests that the nineteenth-century enthusiasm for humanitarian causes resulted 'from shifts in the conventional boundaries of moral responsibility'.[96] The anti-slavery campaign, among other factors, encouraged a shift in humanitarian sentiment to encompass animal welfare. Indeed, leading anti-slavery campaigners were involved in setting up The Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824. Although influential, fear of offending important sporting MPs and peers meant elite blood sports were ignored.[97] Not so with Watts, despite risking the disapprobation of her Leicestershire gentry friends.[98]

In July 1825, sensational national newspaper coverage announced that a prize-fight was to take place in Warwick between a lion named Nero and six bull terrier

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[95] Aucott, *Susanna Watts*, 47-8; *The Humming Bird* 1, no. 7 (1825): 201. See for example: Elizabeth Heyrick, *Customary Remarks on the Evil Tendency of Unrestrained Cruelty, particularly on that practised in Smithfield Market* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1823).

[96] Thomas Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', *American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (1985): 360. See also Turner, *Animals, Pain, and Humanity*.

[97] Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy,* 53-4, 57. Ferguson suggests that Watts was a radical feminist who advocated violent action, although this seems an over-simplification.

[98] Ibid., 63.

dogs. Animal activists were outraged, but to no avail.[99] When the news came to Watts' attention she wrote a twenty-verse Romantic ballad comparing British blood-sports to those of the Romans and published it in *The Humming Bird*.[100] The poem castigates the crowds who 'gaze and shout with manic glee!' at the spectacle of animal fights, but reserves its main criticism for the hypocrisy of the leaders of society who, while

> Sending the Heralds of the Gospel round,
> To every distant coast beneath the sky!
> … Behold! at home, what brutal crimes are thine! [101]

An extended version of the poem, which also criticised the way animals suffered and died in British markets and bone-yards, and now entitled 'Roman and English Pastimes', appeared in *The Insects in Council,* which she published in 1828.[102] The poem targeted both elite, educated sportsmen and working-class sportsmen, all of whom killed and maimed for pleasure. A footnote to the poem, taken from *Bell's Weekly Messenger,* gives an account of the real fight, in which the lion, Nero, refused to retaliate even though tormented and savaged by the dogs. The lion was completely harmless, having been reared since a cub by its owner, the

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[99] *Bell's Weekly Messenger* 1 August 1825.

[100] Susanna Watts, 'Lines on the Fight between the Lion Nero and six Dogs, at Warwick, July 26, 1825', *The Humming Bird* I, no. 10 (1825): 301.

[101] Watts, 'Lines on the Fight', verses 11-12.

[102] Susanna Watts, 'Roman and English Pastimes', in Watts, *The Insects in Council*: *Addressed to Entomologists, with Other Poems* (London: Hatchard; Leicester: Cockshaw, 1828), 55-67.

travelling showman who staged the fight.[103] In her poem, Watts conferred Christ-like qualities on the lion to stir the nation's conscience, and called for legislation against blood-sports, seemingly unconcerned about offending the Duke of Rutland, whose Leicestershire land boasted the finest hunting territory in England, and whose birthday she had marked with a civic poem just over ten years earlier.[104] This suggests, perhaps, how firmly Watts had established her own reputation among the people of Leicester by then.

When the 1833 Act abolishing British colonial slavery was implemented on 1 August 1834 Leicester held grand celebrations. The name of Watts was among those raised in an illuminated display, honouring her as 'The warm-hearted defender of oppressed humanity, the succourer of the destitute and the Animals' friend'.[105] Her death in 1842 was recorded by the local press for the remarkable crowds that it drew.[106] While Catherine Hutton acquired social and cultural authority through her authorship, Susanna Watts employed her writing and poetry to gain civic and political authority, with which to promote her radical claims for social reform. From inauspicious beginnings as an impoverished gentlewoman, she used her status as an author and expertise on Leicester to create for herself an authoritative civic identity, making use of it to intervene in local and national

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[103] *Bell's Weekly Messenger* 1 August 1825.

[104] 'Lines on the Birthday of the Duke of Rutland', *Gentleman's Magazine* 69, no.1 (1799): 61-2.

[105] Clara Parkes, 'Foreword' in Watts' 'Scrapbook', 2 February 1865, MS DE/8170/1, LRO.

[106] *Leicester Chronicle* 19 February 1842.

politics. It is perhaps telling that the 1834 celebrations singled out, not her identity as a published author, but as an activist and campaigner.

Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck (née Galton) (1778-1856)

In 1821, Richard Smith, surgeon to the Bristol Infirmary, held public anatomy lectures; the body on display was that of eighteen-year-old John Horwood, who had been executed for murder.[107] Later, the skull of the deceased was examined by a phrenological expert for signs of criminality; that expert was Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck (née Galton) (1778-1856), one of the women discussed in Chapter 1.[108] Schimmelpenninck was a professional author of religious, aesthetic and phrenological non-fiction. Although best known for her religious writing on Catholic themes, this section focuses on her interest in aesthetics and phrenology, arguing that although Schimmelpenninck probably wrote initially out of financial necessity, she later employed authorship to demonstrate her intellectual creativity.[109] Existing research on Schimmelpenninck includes assessments of her education by Ruth Watts and Barnita Bagchi; an analysis of Schimmelpenninck's theory on aesthetics by Natasha Duquette, and an exploration of her religious

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[107] G. Munro Smith, *A History of the Royal Bristol Infirmary* (London: Simpkin Marshall; Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1917), 215-221.

[108] For phrenology see: John van Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017, first published by Ashgate, 2004); Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984).

[109] See Appendix 2 for a reference list of Schimmelpenninck's extant published writing.

authority by Mary Jean Corbett and Regenia Gagnier.[110] Sources include Smith's account of Horwood's death and Schimmelpenninck's published works, including her spiritual autobiography, published posthumously (1858), which shows the influence of her religious refashioning as she moved from Quakerism through Methodism (1808) to Moravianism (1818).[111]

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[110] Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (Harlowe: Longman,1998), 28-9; Barnita Bagchi, '"Voilà la Femme Forte": The Unusual Education of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck' in *Moneta's Veil: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Literature*, edited by Malabika Sarkar (Delhi: Pearson Education, 2010); Natasha Duquette, 'Veiled Exegesis: Dissenting Women's Aesthetic Approach to Theological Hermeneutics and Social Action' in *British Women and the Intellectual World in the Long Eighteenth Century*, edited by Teresa Barnard (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); see also: Frederick and Natasha Duquette, '"Delicacy of Taste" Redeemed: The Aesthetic Judgement and Spiritual formation of Austen's Clergymen-Heroes', in *Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety and Harmony*, edited by Natasha Duquette and Elisabeth Lenckos (Bethlehem: Lehigh University, 2014). Corbett, *Representing Femininity, 80-1*; Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), 214-5.

[111] Richard Smith, 'Horwood Papers', MS 35893/36/v_i, Bristol Archives (hereafter BA), Bristol; Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck*, edited by Christiana C. Hankin (London: Longman, 1858); for spiritual autobiographies see: Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville: University

Early Development

Schimmelpenninck acknowledged that recollection of biographic events was coloured by later experiences: 'it both modifies others and is modified by them'.[112] This observation suggests that in creating a spiritual autobiography, itself an act of self-creation, Schimmelpenninck employed what Peterson describes as myth-making, the 'repeated shaping of the narrative of her personal career'.[113] Although the work was unfinished at Schimmelpenninck's death, it seems it was intended to be an account of an authorial and a philosophical, as well as a religious, life.[114]

The completed volume 1, on early life, reveals layers of meaning: ambition, sense of personal achievement in adversity, justification, guilt, and disappointment, and requires careful negotiation. For example, the account of childhood, in its very contradictions, appears realistic, eliciting the reader's sympathy for a heroic child struggling in adversity, dealing with the loneliness of her life. Engaging stories of Mary Anne's religious encounters with Joseph Priestley, who she loved but blamed for confusing her with his latitudinarianism; her happy relationship with James and Annie Watt, known for their Presbyterian gloom but to her loving and kind, and the presence, as she dictates the autobiography to Hankin, of an

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Press of Virginia (hereafter UPV) 1999); D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2005); for refashioning see: Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians*, 29. Moravianism: an early form of Methodism.

[112] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 1:169.

[113] Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters,* 48, 93-5.

[114] Volume 2 was compiled by Hankin.

increasingly primitive faith in her adult life, are all layers in her successful myth-making which depict her as grappling with misfortune to become, as she might have written had she lived, a committed Christian and an intellectual author.[115]

Schimmelpenninck was the eldest of ten children of Quaker Samuel John Galton (1753-1832), a wealthy Birmingham gun-manufacturer and banker, and his wife Lucy Barclay (1757-1817), descendant of Robert Barclay, 'father' of modern Quakerism. Living in quiet opulence near Birmingham, Schimmelpenninck enjoyed a social position considerably higher than that of Hutton or Watts. The Galtons were intellectuals with interests in science and aesthetics.[116] Samuel Galton was a Fellow of the Royal Society, member of the Linnaean Society, and of the Midland-based Lunar Society, whose members were described by Jenny Uglow as 'brilliant representatives of the informal scientific web that cut across class' in the later eighteenth century.[117] Lunar members often met at Barr House, the hospitable home of the Galtons, and the families socialised and intermarried. Young Mary Anne attended meals with guests and had remarkable opportunities to converse

[115] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 1:29-33, 1:341-43,

[116] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 1:62; for the Galtons' business interests and wealth see: Barbara M.D. Smith, 'The Galtons of Birmingham: Quaker Gun Merchants and Bankers, 1702-1831', *Business History* 9, no. 2 (1967).

[117] Uglow, Jenny. "Lunar Society of Birmingham (act. c. 1765–c. 1800)." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-59220 (also lists principle members); accessed 18 May 2018.

with men and women of ideas like Joseph and Mary Priestley, James and Annie Watt and Dr. William Withering.[118]

The Galton children received an extensive liberal education, reflecting their parents' Enlightenment philosophy, but chronic asthma and the wearing of a metal corset for spinal correction left Mary Anne with a life-long 'timidity and nervous apprehension', and she was tutored by her parents on her own from the age of eleven. She studied the classics, the humanities, mathematics and Latin, but her pleasure in this was marred by her father's inability to modify lessons to her developing understanding. Natural philosophy, including entomology, and classification, fascinated her. Father and daughter were meticulous life-long observers and recorders, a family trait. Her nephew, Francis Galton, was knighted for his development of scientific statistics, but it is doubtful whether Mary Anne was expected to apply her scientific knowledge to wider purposes. Ruth Watts suggests that even where 'daughters, like sons, were expected to join in the scientific culture of the family', they were denied access to most late eighteenth-century scientific societies.[119]

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[118] For intermarriage see Chapter 1 of this thesis and Appendix 3: 'Networks'; Schimmelpenninck, *Life* 1:21, 1:36-45.

[119] Ruth Watts, *Women in Science: A Social and Cultural History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 88; Nicholas Wright Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 340; for an extended study of Schimmelpenninck's education see Bagchi, '"Voilà la Femme Forte".

From her mother, who considered herself an aesthete, Mary Anne absorbed a vague form of Christianity, and a broad knowledge of literature and modern languages. This intensive education was appreciated by Schimmelpenninck in later life, but she complained that by exposing her indiscriminately to literature and the views of his friends, her father had left her 'wholly perplexed amidst intricate doctrines and teachings I was unable to unravel, and precepts I could not definitely understand'. Some of Galton's friends, including Priestley and Richard Edgeworth, held radical political and religious views, and talk about French revolutionary violence horrified the young Schimmelpenninck.[120]

In 1798, concerned about her daughter's mental state, Lucy Galton sent Mary Anne on a month's visit to radical writer and educationalist Anna Barbauld, and again the following year. In the winter of 1801she sent her to Elizabeth Hamilton, the Scottish writer, in Bath, perhaps hoping that they would raise her daughter's spirits, yet when Barbauld encouraged Mary Anne to write a pamphlet on education, Lucy Galton disapproved. She thanked 'Mrs B' for her 'high opinion, I may say her just opinion, of my daughter … At all events, I have no ambition to see her an author'. To Mary Anne her mother wrote: 'Decide as you think best … You have the power, if I may so express it, but not the knack of writing'. In awe of her mother, Mary Anne did not proceed, but always admired Barbauld.[121]

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[120] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 1:57-8; 1:304-5, 1:248-9 and 1:311-12.

[121] Undated letter from Lucy Galton to Mrs B___, in Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:17-20; 2:29-30; William McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore: JHUP, 2008), 495.

In 1806 Mary Anne married Bristol-based shipping owner, Lambert Schimmelpenninck, her father's business acquaintance, but by 1811 his business had failed, a probable consequence of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.[122] As mentioned in Chapter 1, following her request to have her inheritance reinstated, her mother took 'deep personal offence' and ceased communication around 1811. They never met again, and in that year, Schimmelpenninck began writing to supplement the family income.[123] Encouraged by writer and philanthropist Hannah More (1745-1833), who sent her material on the French dissident Jansenist community of Port Royal, Schimmelpenninck produced *Narrative of a Tour to Alet* in 1813, the first of four Port Royal books which went into numerous editions.[124] Both women supported the Bristol anti-slavery society, and are examples of provincial middle-class women offering cultural support to members of their networks. Bagchi suggests Schimmelpenninck saw a reflection of her own oppression in that of slaves.[125] Similarly, the destruction of the Jansenist community resonated with her religious uncertainty. In 1815 she published again, but in a different genre, and it is on these less well-known works that the rest of this section will focus.

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[122] For Galton slavery interests see: Smith, 'The Galtons of Birmingham', 138.

[123] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:74-5.

[124] Schimmelpenninck, *Life,* Mary Anne, 2:81-4; Schimmelpenninck, *Narrative of a Tour to La Grande Chartreuse and Alet* (London: Arch, 1813); Stott, *Hannah More*, 85, 266.

[125] Bagchi, '" Voilà la Femme Forte", 17.

The Mystical Sublime

Schimmelpenninck's second book, *Theory of the Classification of Beauty and Deformity* (1815), sought to Christianize aestheticism.[126] Published in 1815, *Theory* was written for and addressed to 'our British ladies', those of 'informed intellect, and cultivated tastes', its aim to furnish them 'with innocent relaxation [for] the very few hours which a conscientious Christian ought to afford to mere pursuits of taste'.[127] By employing aesthetics in what almost amounted to a domestic conduct book, Schimmelpenninck intended, like Hutton with her *Tour of Africa*, to both educate and entertain. Her reference to 'British ladies' was significant and self-conscious. As Emma Major and Linda Colley have shown, during the French Wars patriotic rhetoric, often linked to notions of Britishness, became the common currency of women writers wishing to ease their entry into public debates on cultural and social subjects. Schimmelpenninck and her Bristolian neighbour, Hannah More (1745-1833), for example, presented themselves as deeply conservative, patriotic Protestants who wrote only 'for the good of others', enabling them to make significant interventions in religious, cultural and social life with, as Major notes, 'a safe air of propriety'.[128]

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[126] Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Theory on the Classification of Beauty and Deformity* (London: Arch, 1815); Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:26-7. For aestheticism and dissenting religion see: See Anne F. Janowitz, 'The Aikin Family, Retrospectively', in *Religious Dissent*.

[127] Schimmelpenninck, *Theory*, iii-v.

[128] Major, *Madam Britannia,* 240-41; Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation, 262-3, 267-9.*

Schimmelpenninck, however, had a further aim: to reintroduce religion into the sublime. Having studied, from the age of about eleven, *Physiognomy* by Johann Lavater, Swiss mystic and pastor, she contrasted his mystical sense of God with her mother's colder, rational philosophy and intellect, and, conscious of their difference, began to adopt Lavater's ideas.[129] As a mature woman she was deeply religious and would have been aware of the atheistic turn in aesthetics following the publication of the influential *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) by Edmund Burke.[130]

Taking this work as a starting point, Schimmelpenninck's *Theory* introduced the mystical into the intellectual discourse on the sublime. Philip Shaw argues that Burke's argument is almost entirely secular: 'God is no longer required to guarantee the authenticity of our experience'.[131] The sublime for Burke was not only a rhetorical phenomenon of literature, as originally conceived by Greek scholar Longinus in the first century AD, but was also manifest in nature as obscure, large or destructive natural forces, such as mountain landscapes and violent storms, and in man-made super-structures such as gothic architecture and

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[129] Schimmelpenninck, *Life,* 1:13, 1:62, 1:167-68,1:173-74. Johann Kaspar Lavater (2016), *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, URL: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johann-Kaspar-Lavater, accessed June 13, 2018.

Probably Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, published in English in 1789.

[130] Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Newton Stewart: Anodos, 2018, first published 1756).

[131] Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006),49.

industrial buildings. These, Burke suggested, gave individuals a 'sublime' sense of terror in their own insignificance and mortality but, when viewed from a safe vantage point, 'they may be, and they are, delightful, as we every day experience'.[132]

Schimmelpenninck redefined Beauty as a spectrum of theology and aestheticism, within which she first created three groups, the sublime, the sentimental and the sprightly, then sub-divided the sublime into the active or terrible sublime, and the passive or contemplative sublime. Her religious, or mystical sublime, she placed under contemplative sublime and defined it as:

> Ideas of the eternal, supreme, and self-existent Being; or of time, eternity, space, death etc., which the longer we think upon, the more inscrutable we find the subject.[133]

In offering an alternative to Burke's theory, Schimmelpenninck sought to reopen aesthetics to middle-class, conservative Christian women. The impetus for her *Theory* probably came from her Methodist conversion (1808) and is visible in her autobiography: 'Woman must uphold, 'in literature, as in other things … the moral and religious influence … by which man can alone be redeemed from the fall she

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[132] Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, section VII, 22.; for analyses of the evolution of aesthetics and the sublime see also: Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2010); M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 1971, first published 1953).

[133] Schimmelpenninck, *Theory of the Classification of Beauty*, 26.

brought upon him'.[134] Corbett argues that such books acted as moral agents, projected by women like Schimmelpenninck to 'save all readers'. By promoting this theological theme in her work on aesthetics, Schimmelpenninck Christianized aestheticism, although, as Natasha Duquette argues, this was accomplished quietly, by 'veiled exegesis'. Duquette also suggests that Schimmelpenninck's religious influence on, for example, her cousins Elizabeth Fry (née Gurney) and her sisters (confirmed by Fry's biographer, Susanna Corder), flowed from 'her own socially conscious female spirituality, compassion and leadership', itself a form of contemplative sublimity.[135] Support of this kind was often tangible in the imagined community of female writers and activists. Hannah More, describing Fry as a female Daniel, sent her copies of her books, and in *Practical Piety,* wrote a tribute to her work. In turn, More was visited by John Gurney and his daughter Elizabeth Fry, and regularly by Anna Barbauld, even though More disapproved of Barbauld's Unitarianism.[136] These acts of unlooked-for support from within that widespread imagined community were empowering, highlighting the influence and reach of many female networks of that period.

Schimmelpenninck's *Theory* was also part of that support network, in that she was reaching out to conservative readers to show aesthetics within a religious framework. However, as *Theory* had only one print run, Hankin, her editor, was

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[134] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 1:125.

[135] Corbett, *Representing Feminity*, 81; Natasha Duquette, 'Veiled Exegesis', 115, 122-23; Susanna Corder, *Life of Elizabeth Fry* (Philadelphia: Longstreth,1853), 2.

[136] Stott, *Hannah More*, 323; Duquette, *Veiled Exegesis*, 123; M.G. Jones, *Hannah More*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1952), 215-16.

probably right in hinting that the book was too esoteric for many readers.[137] *The Monthly Review* seemed to agree, suggesting Schimmelpenninck's classificatory impulse was too complicated: 'every bough has its branches, every branch has its twigs … but we must acknowledge that, at the end of each, many pleasing blossoms … wave o'er the path'. The only identified review of the work, it allocated seven pages to a polite scrutiny of the *Theory*, but in describing it as 'an elegant volume … in every way adapted for the use of the elegant world', the reviewer placed Schimmelpenninck's work firmly in the category of feminine leisure, rather than that of serious philosophic enquiry.[138] This was hardly fair; Schimmelpenninck was a product of a family with an utter confidence in its own inherited intellectual abilities and a drive to express them, and as a result, wrote a complex theory of aesthetics. She was, additionally, someone with a purposeful religious agency that enabled her to challenge Burke's atheistic interpretation. In doing so, this provincial woman saw herself as a writer of intellect, someone capable of challenging a well-established theory. In *Theory* she also developed her ideas on physiognomy, which would lead her to phrenology.

Phrenology

Phrenology, immensely popular in Britain, especially in the 1820s and 1830s, had 'a profound effect on Victorian culture'.[139] A controversial combination of a 'theory of the brain and science of character', it employed cranial examination to assess

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[137] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:85-6.

[138] 'Review of *Theory on the Classification of Beauty*, by Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck', *The Monthly Review* 80, no. 7 (1816): 309.

[139] Van Wyhe, *Phrenology,*1, 204.

potential intelligence and aptitude. Sally Shuttleworth describes it as a 'set of scientific and social doctrines which fitted the developing culture of industrial, provincial England. Its language could also be used to convey the psychological internalised pressures of class, gender and power'.[140] Developed by Franz Joseph Gall of Vienna, it was introduced in England by Johann Gaspar Spurzheim in 1814. Offering to reveal the secrets of the mind, phrenology attracted many doctors, scientists and other intellectuals at first, as well as sceptics. In validating existing class and gender hierarchies it also appealed to those interested in maintaining the hegemonic status quo.[141] Schimmelpenninck entered this new field with enthusiasm, and while her work on aesthetics had received only a lukewarm response, she was successful in establishing a reputation as an expert phrenologist.

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[140] Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science, 3.* Sally Shuttleworth, 'Psychological Definition and Social Power: Phrenology in the Novels of Charlotte Bronte', in *Nature Transfigured: Science and Literature, 1700-1900,* edited by John Christie and Sally Shuttleworth (Manchester: MUP, 1989), quoted in Watts, *Women in Science,*114-15.

[141] Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science,* 32-3, 110; Johann Spurzheim, *The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim* (London: Baldwin, 1815); see also: George Combe, *The Constitution of Man* (Edinburgh: Anderson and London: Longman, 1828); for contemporary criticism of phrenology see; John Gordon, 'Review' of *The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim*, *Edinburgh Review*, 25, no. 49 (1815).

Medicine had long been practised by British women in kitchens, still-rooms and cellars. Elizabeth Shackleton, for example, sold her medicine nationwide.[142] Ruth Watts argues that as scientists sought to establish their professional status in the eighteenth century, women were marginalised in the scientific world and natural philosophy became increasingly linked with masculinity. This trend is well-documented in obstetrics and in the increasing power of 'men-midwives'; it was, nevertheless, constantly challenged by women like Schimmelpenninck.[143]

Studying Lavater's *Physiognomics*, which dealt with temperament and which Spurzheim incorporated within phrenology, Schimmelpenninck's interest in character was ignited.[144] Around 1815, Spurzheim lectured in Bristol, Schimmelpenninck's possible starting point in phrenology.[145] From 1823, the local Institute for the Advancement of Science, Literature and the Arts held lectures on subjects including 'Natural philosophy for women and children'. Spurzheim lectured there in 1827-28, Schimmelpenninck attended and they became acquainted.[146] Like the Schimmelpennincks, he moved in the social and

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[142] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: YUP, 1999, first published 1998) 154-55.

[143] Watts, *Women in Science*, 63-5, 168-9.

[144] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 1:167, 171.

[145] Van Wyhe, *Phrenology*, 44.

[146] Michael Neve, 'Natural Philosophy, medicine and the culture of science in provincial England: the cases of Bristol, 1790-1850' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 1984), 149, 152; Schimmelpenninck, Life, 2:172.

intellectual circle of Richard Smith, surgeon of Bristol Infirmary.[147] They belonged to the provincial intellectual networks that supported those amateurs who sought entry into the scientific lecture circuit. Women who desired such opportunities but wished to avoid criticism for speaking in public, like Edith Somerville, mathematician, astronomer and honorary member of the Bristol Institute, often negotiated an acceptable space for themselves by speaking at private social gatherings, much as Catherine Marsh did with evangelising. As Lawrence Klein has observed, these could serve as public spaces within private homes.[148] The Schimmelpenninck home also attracted 'a good deal of society … literary people, family friends and connections, and others', where Spurzheim and Schimmelpenninck may have discussed phrenology.[149] Watts argues that in such private gatherings women influenced the spread of ideas across many networks.[150]

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[147] Undated memorandum of Richard Smith re. dinner party held at his home on 8 February 1827 at which Spurzheim and the Schimmelpennincks were guests, (unnumbered) MS 35893/36/v_i, '*Horwood Papers'*, BA.

[148] Creese, Mary R. S. "Somerville [née Fairfax; other married name Greig], Mary (1780–1872), science writer and mathematics expositor." *ODNB;* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26024; 19 June 2018; for Marsh see Chapter 2; Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction', 105.

[149] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:88.

[150] Ruth Watts, 'A Gendered Journey: Travel of Ideas in England c. 1750-1800', *History of Education* 37, no. 4 (2008): 521.

Schimmelpenninck had a nationwide network of relatives and friends in Quaker and other denominations which included: the famously intellectual Fox family of Falmouth; a philanthropic network which included Hannah More and Hannah Kilham, and an intellectual network of friends like Barbauld and Hamilton, who introduced her to Maria Edgeworth 'and other literary people'.[151] Among such networks she found endorsement for her phrenological expertise. Writing to a friend in 1824, she described her phrenological activity while visiting the Foxes: 'Imagine Robert Fox, who you knew as a lad … Picture to yourself his forehead, and the sides of his head with what Spurzheim used to call "perpendicular walls of reason and truth"'.[152] Clearly, she contributed her own ideas as well as assisting in the travel of ideas of others. She also devised charts on which to record phrenological readings, another example of the family fondness for empirical research.[153] Christiana Hankin, her cousin and editor, wrote that friends and complete strangers solicited phrenological readings from Schimmelpenninck, some seeking advice on future careers, and parents brought children for examination, suggesting that her reputation as a phrenologist, provincially and through her wider networks, was growing.[154]

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[151] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:13-14; 2:116.

[152] Schimmelpenninck to unnamed correspondent, 1824, in Horace Pym, editor, *Memories of Old Friends, Being Extracts from the Journal and Letters of Caroline Fox* (London: Smith, Elder, 1882), xvi.

[153] Watts, *A Gendered Journey*, 530; for Horwood's charts see: MS 35893/36/v_i, '*Horwood Papers'*, BA.

[154] Schimmelpenninck, *Life*, 2:172.

In 1821 she was thus invited to carry out a phrenological examination on the skull of John Horwood, recently executed for murder in Bristol. Before the 1832 Anatomy Act only cadavers of executed felons could be legally dissected and were highly prized by surgeons; the Bristol Infirmary surgeon, Richard Smith, applied for, and was granted, the body of Horwood.[155] G. Munro Smith, historian and surgeon at Bristol Infirmary wrote: 'Richard Smith, who attended the murdered woman … gave evidence at Horwood's trial, obtained his body, dissected it [publicly], and finally had his skin tanned and bound a book with it'.[156]

The book contained the papers and Smith's account of the case. Once Schimmelpenninck had completed her phrenological examination – in this case privately, probably because a woman's involvement in the process of dissection could have proved scandalous – the skeleton was articulated and placed in the hospital's museum with the skull.[157]

Having completed a chart, a phrenological wheel (figure 2) and a six-page report, Schimmelpenninck concluded that Horwood's skull did not show a murderous tendency: 'The organ of destructiveness is perfectly wanting', she wrote, and suggested that Horwood had probably been a 'brutal, coarse, bullying ruffian',

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[155] Memorandum by Richard Smith, 'A Few particulars respecting the Murder as far as I was particularly concerned', 115-120 (or 71), MS 35893/36/v_i, '*Horwood Papers'*, BA; Munroe Smith, *A History of the Royal Infirmary, 215-218*; for the process of binding books in human skin, Anthropodermic bibliopegy, see: *The Anthropodermic Book Project*, https://anthropodermicbooks.org.

[156] Munro Smith, *A History of the Royal Infirmary*, 216.

[157] Memorandum, Smith, 120, MS 35893/36/v_i, *Horwood Papers*, B. A.

rather ‘than either an ill-natured fellow, or a malicious villain’. The chart was incomplete because, as her report notes ruefully:

> Tho’ perfectly acquainted with the organs in the living subject; yet a woman, not being acquainted familiarly with the forms of the skulls, cannot judge inside of the sockets of the eyes, of the various degrees of projection … All those organs can only be filled up by a medical man.[158]

This was an acknowledgement that phrenology was the limit of her entrée into medical science. Despite Schimmelpenninck’s lack of medical training, Smith seems to have regarded her if not as a scientist, certainly as a competent phrenologist. She herself clearly felt sufficiently confident by 1827 to publish the *Phrenographic Register*, a technical manual to help others develop the skill of phrenological assessment (on live patients). It did not excite any reviews, and indeed was probably intended for limited circulation to members of the Bristol Phrenological Society and interested friends.[159] It offers evidence of Schimmelpenninck’s perception of herself as an expert contributor in what was then regarded as a new but reputable scientific field.[160]

Schimmelpenninck never became a campaigner like Susanna Watts. Instead, she employed her class, and status as an author, to gain entry to the cultural life of the

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[158] Schimmelpenninck to Smith, ‘Phrenological report’, 109/3; ‘Phrenological chart’, ‘Phrenological wheel’ (undated and unnumbered), MS35893/36/v_i, *Horwood Papers*, BA.

[159] Letter from Mr Clark to Spurzheim, 15 December 1826 concerning the Bristol Phrenological Society, 111, MS 35893/36/v_i, *Horwood Papers*, BA.

[160] Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Phrenographic Register* (Bristol: Taylor, 1827).

local elite. Yet her interest in phrenology took precedence over her conservatism and gained her access to the professional world of anatomy. She also employed her networks as tools for shaping an identity as an expert in aestheticism and phrenology. Her choice of subjects perhaps reflected a desire for recognition, by her family, of her intellectual endeavours, and in that she was disappointed. Nevertheless, and despite women's limited access to scientific and medical education, within her provincial community and wider networks, Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck contributed to the travel of ideas, and employed her authorial identity to achieve recognition as an intellectual woman of art and science.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that provincial middle-class women were prepared to use their authorial agency to extend the boundaries of their lives. Hutton used her literary reputation to rebuild the status she thought had been lost in the riots of 1791. Probably of greatest value to her, with her isolated life and her love of literary culture and social distinction in others, were her epistolary networks. Although careful to maintain an image of domestic propriety, shying away from notions of professionalism, her publications show an author making skilful use of her epistolary abilities and to some extent adapting to fit in with changing publication trends. In Watts' case, her cultural currency as an author took her first into civic life, to promote the growing town of Leicester to its citizens, and then into radical local and national campaigning against slavery and animal cruelty. She also championed and created social institutions to alleviate suffering in the town, and helped to expose corruption in public life, the outcome of which was to bring about a change in national law with the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act. Watts

thus acquired civic and political authority through her authorship, and used it to pursue causes she believed in. Finally, Schimmelpenninck, after a troubled childhood and a traumatic rupture from her family, employed her authorship in the arts and sciences which had so preoccupied her parents, finally receiving recognition for her intellectual qualities from the scientific community, at a time when phrenology was seen as a science. This chapter thus concurs with Peterson's insistence that the recovery of 'forgotten' writers such as Hutton, Watts and Schimmelpenninck is important to women's history. While mostly absent from the literary canon and largely active away from London literary circles, they nevertheless developed complex authorial identities that spanned a bewildering array of genres, routes to authorship and motives for writing, but nonetheless shared a desire to engage with wider, and sometimes overlapping, intellectual networks, and a determination, however veiled, to achieve the status of 'ladies of letters'.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the experiences of eighteen Midland women who were the wives, sisters, daughters and mothers of the middle-class entrepreneurial and professional men of the region between approximately 1760 and 1860. They have been the focus of this study because, while the lives of many of the men of these families have been celebrated, the women have been generally overlooked. Paying particular attention to changing social and cultural attitudes towards gender and class, the thesis has investigated women's efforts to create and sustain their own roles and identities. Placing their experiences in the context of wider debates on women's roles in this period, the thesis has also analysed the role of networks in assisting women to operate in public spaces and in broadening their political consciousness, and has questioned what, if any, generational changes were visible. The themed chapters have analysed the women's activities and efforts to develop their own roles and identities in five areas that emerged from the sources as being of special significance in their lives: business, religion, philanthropy, domesticity and authorship.

The main finding was that women did shape their own identities; they undertook a variety of roles which enabled them to negotiate social and cultural conventions of class and gender when it was necessary. Many adopted well-established strategies to widen their access to public roles by, for example, using discourses of femininity or religion, and making use of family or social networks. Others, like Catherine Marsh and Abiah Darby, exploited their existing status and authority, or that of their families, to extend what could be described as their religious and

political activism. As individuals they all succeeded to the extent that their subjectivities allowed, and some, like Marsh, exceeded their own expectations. Women managed sizeable businesses, and in the case of married women, also ran busy homes and cared for children. Their experience shows that they were accepted in the business and the commercial world on merit; being honest and credit worthy proved more important than their gender. Even in large concerns, like the business of Boulton and Watt, Annie Watt was seen as a safe pair of hands during the men's many absences. Though not formal partners, Annie Watt and Elizabeth Shaw were fully visible in the business.

Nevertheless, in the absence of formal or legal endorsement of their role in wider society women were often faced with constantly re-establishing their authority, which was always unstable and often contingent on place, time and the agendas of others. This is particularly noticeable in the experiences of women preachers, who were constantly moving on to new places where the influence of their religious denomination, or their family status, went unrecognized, as seen in Abiah Darby's experience in Morpeth. For others, like Elizabeth Smith, their environment was constantly hostile, as they dealt with the anger of the landowners and squirearchy on one hand and the frustration and anti-clericalism of farm workers on the other. Smith's response to such obstacles was to cultivate the support of small farmers and artisans who provided land and premises for meetings, thus reducing the incidence of violence. Although determined individuals such as Darby and Smith were pioneers in identifying spaces from which to operate, it was not until substantial and pro-active networks were established, such as those created by Mary Lloyd and Lucy Townsend for the Female Society for Birmingham (FSB) in the 1820s, which endowed women with a sense of belonging to much wider

‘imagined communities’, that women began to manifest as a substantial body of authority which could command attention and normalise the presence of women in public life.

By the same token, networks also ensured that women’s experiences contributed to the wider debates on women’s roles, as they encouraged communication, through epistolary networks, between the associations they belonged to or, like Marsh and Hutton, made regular contributions to the letter columns of newspapers on current affairs. That women’s political consciousness was broadened by networks is indisputable. Charlotte Matthews, for instance, was meticulous in maintaining her research networks, and openly socialised with influential people who might impart political and financial information, compensating for the fact that she could not attend homosocial clubs and dinners at which so much business was done. Politics and religion were also closely interwoven in this period, as the existence of many denominational magazines confirmed. Two newspapers supported ultra-Protestantism, and Marsh contributed anti-Catholic rhetoric to one of them. Smith, though not the radical that Valenze identified her as, stood passively between the land-owners, who suspected Primitive Methodists of radicalism, and her converts.

The FSB, along with other women’s associations, gave many women involved in philanthropic activities their first taste of extra-Parliamentary politics with petitioning against slavery, and almost certainly inspired women to campaign on other issues. Networking was exemplified in the breadth and depth of the system created by Lloyd and Townsend, in an association which outlasted most other anti-slavery societies in England. By enlisting the help of friends and relatives to form a

temperance society, Rebecca Kenrick sought to create a philanthropic and social network of her own. She also became involved with a much larger network, the British Association for the Advancement of Science. This, and other examples in the thesis, confirm how networks could have a significant role in all aspects of these women's lives, and was probably one of the most important drivers of the expansion of women's associational life.

Generational change was evident in the transition of artisan families such as the Wedgwoods, Shaws and Watts to gentrification as their wealth increased. Their daughters did not enter their family businesses, suggesting that the exit of daughters of successful entrepreneurial families from business may often have been due to wealth rather than gender. It certainly was not because they lacked ability; the Wedgwood women later helped to keep the pottery business solvent at a time of financial difficulty, showing greater business acumen than their brothers. Some women left their philanthropic and religious work as a legacy: not all of Lloyd's daughters enjoyed philanthropy, but one, Sara Sturge, maintained most of her mother's charities, including the FSB. Kenrick's nieces, also with one exception, did not follow in her footsteps. On the other hand, Smith inspired the next generation of female preachers in Primitive Methodism from among her young converts, and Darby's daughter-in-law Deborah took her mission to America, and also inspired Elizabeth Fry, as did Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, to start her prison mission. Marsh inspired generations of soldiers, sailors and young boys with her best-selling *Memorial of Captain Hedley Vicars*, as well as several women who became leading female philanthropists. Exceeding her own expectations, she was also instrumental in the process of Christianising the British armed forces.

Women who employed their authorship on ‘issues’, like Watts and Schimmelpenninck, or across the genres, like Hutton, may have been popular in their time, but once the writing community aspired to professional status and a literary canon, many fell into relative obscurity. However, this does not detract from their achievement as writers; they had something to say on a wide range of issues which should be of interest to historians, providing as it does a more extensive picture of women’s thoughts and experiences in this period, as well as insight into the complexities of becoming ‘Ladies of Letters’. In addition, it shows how, with confidence gained, women authors could develop their identities further: Hutton through extending her epistolary circle to include celebrities like Charles Dickens, Watts in the arena of civil rights and Schimmelpenninck in the field of science.

Not all the women were in the vanguard of radical change; some, like Elizabeth Wheler, saw themselves as leading primarily domestic lives, others, like Kenrick, had considerable domestic commitments and her philanthropic projects were small-scale local ones. However, it is as important to study these women as it is to recover ‘forgotten’ writers, and for the same reason. Without such women, we view the eighteenth and nineteenth century through an opaque lens, ignoring a significant constituent part of the middle-class womanhood of that time, perhaps representing the majority. Just like the other women analysed in this thesis, Wheler and Kenrick negotiated a space in which to develop a sense of self which accorded with their own complex subjectivities concerning gender and class conventions. Domesticity and domestic consumption, furthermore, provided women such as Wheler, Anne Boulton and Watt with an arena in which to express their own independence and authority, both within and outside marriage.

By analysing the experiences of eighteen women with roots in the Midlands, thirteen of whom have been subject to little or no historical scrutiny, this thesis has extended existing knowledge in the field of social and cultural history. In applying a micro-history approach to sources, it has revealed the nuances and complexities of their lived experiences, demonstrating that these women, largely hidden from historical view, gained considerable autonomy over the formation of their own identities and were active agents in many aspects of public and domestic life. They shaped their own identities by undertaking various roles which enabled them to negotiate social and cultural conventions of class and gender, in a way that previous studies of the entrepreneurial and professional families of the Midlands have often ignored.

Appendix 1: Details of case studies

Name	Dates	Marriage	Religion	Family Business or Professional Background	Chapters
Boulton Anne	1768-1829	Never married	Anglican	Manufacturing/ invention	1, 4
Darby Abiah (née Maude)	1716-1794	1746 Abraham	Society of Friends	Ironmasters	2
Florry Sarah	1744-1832	Never married	Anglican	Metal factoring	1
Hutton Catherine	1757-1846	Never married	Unitarian	Commercial	4, 5
Kenrick Rebecca	1799-1891	Never married	Unitarian	Manufacturing	3
Lloyd Mary (née Honeychurch)	1795-1865	1823 Samuel	Society of Friends	Ironmasters	3
Marsh Catherine	1818-1912	Never married	Anglican	Anglican clerics	2
Matthews Charlotte (née Marlar)	1759-1802	1776 William	Anglican	Banking	1
Schimmelpenninck Mary Anne (née Galton)	1778-1856	1806 Lambert	Society of Friends/Methodist/ Moravian	Manufacturing/ banking	1, 5
Shaw Elizabeth (née Wilkinson)	1788-1869	1813 John	Methodist	Metal Factoring/ ironmongery	1
Smith Elizabeth (later Russell)	1805-1836	1833 Thomas	Primitive Methodist	Glove wholesaling	2
Townsend Lucy (née Jesse)	1781-1847	1807 Charles	Anglican	Anglican clerics	3
Watt Annie (McGrigor)	1744-1832	1776 James	Presbyterian	Engineering/ invention	1, 4
Watts Susanna	1768-1842	Never married	Anglican/Baptist	Gentry	5
Wedgwood Catherine (Kitty)	1774-1823	Never married	Unitarian	Ceramic manufacturing	1
Wedgwood Sally (née Wedgwood)	1734-1815	1764 Josiah I	Unitarian	Merchant gentry/ceramic manufacturing	1
Wedgwood Sarah Elizabeth	1776-1856	Never married	Unitarian	Ceramic manufacturing	1
Wheler Elizabeth Ann (née Galton)	1808-1906	1844 Wheler	Anglican	Manufacturing/Banking	4

Appendix 2: Reference List of Established Writing of Authors in Chapter 5

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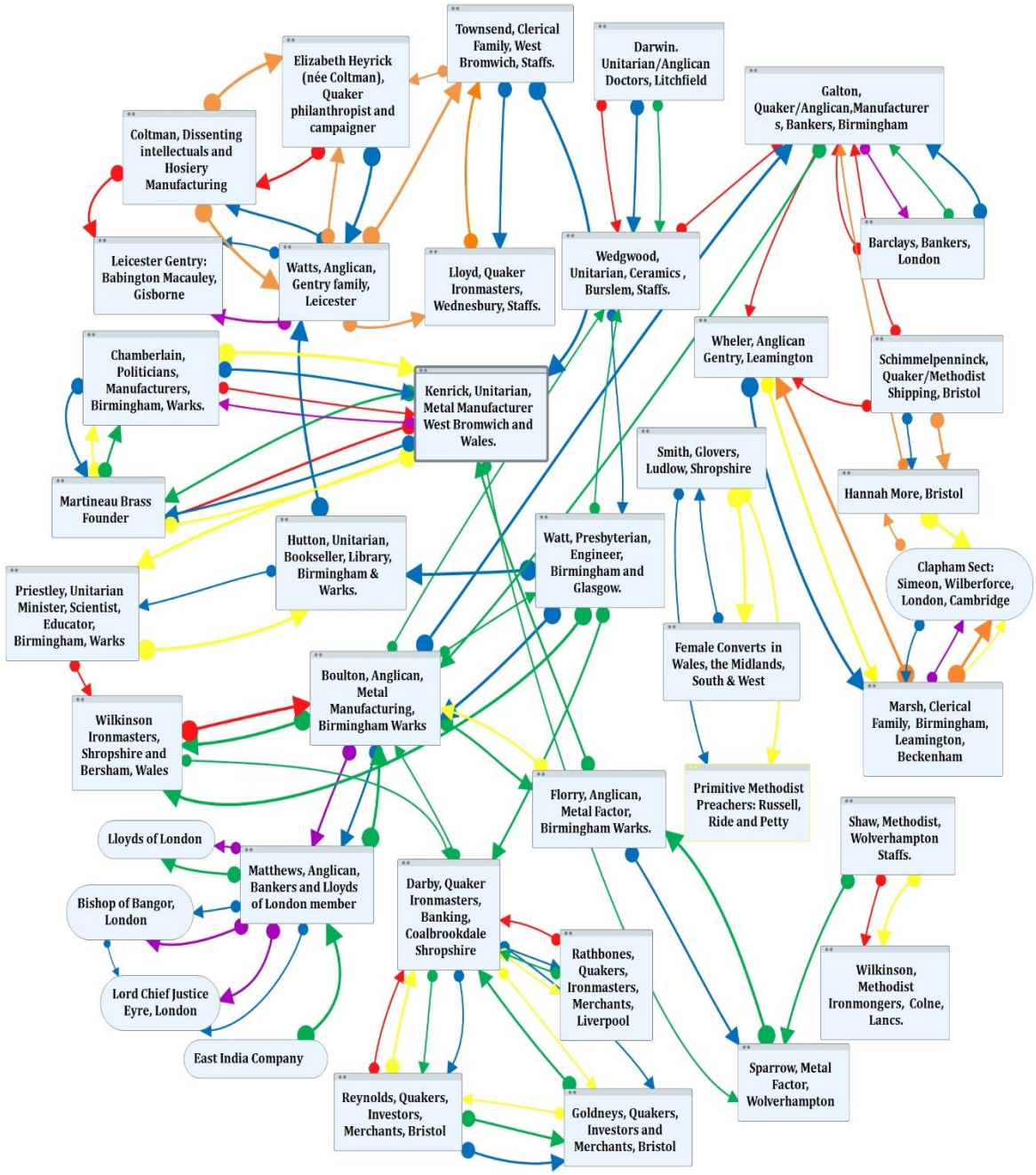
Appendix 3: Family Networks and Backgrounds Chart



	Intermarriage		Business
	Social		Religion/Politics
	Philanthropy		Influential Contacts

LEGEND

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